Featuring the Bagyan: A10

Bawasan ang pork barrel, o talayan nang canggalen!
VIEWS A-11 • TV TEXT 29-10

■ News/A2
Palace now pushing for freeze, not cut, in IRA

■ World/A12
Terrorism blamed for Russ jet crash

■ Magazine
Ronaldo Puno: Backroom to frontline

■ Sports
Maroons stun Tams in UAAP

■ Lifestyle
Zoo ahoy!

GMA blows top again

By Gil Cabacungan Jr.

MAYBE it's the excitement in his...

The controversial vice mayor of President Macapagal-Arroyo hurled epithets at her Pulong Bayan yesterday in Pandacan, Manila, ignited by her audience's apparent lack of

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER Sunday
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

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Gov't to cut perks, trips, overtime pay

THE PHILIPPINES' Mary Antoinette Rivero (left) holds her own in taekwondo against Argentina's Nadina Sanchez Bueno at the Olympic Games. Rivero won the match.

By Gil Cabacungan Jr.

AT HER inauguration nearly one month ago, she promised to run a government that would live within its means.

Now President Macapagal-Arroyo is preparing to sign executive order that will implement austerity measures ranging from suspending overtime pay and area benefits for government employees to cutting down on foreign travel, seminars and parties by all government agencies, according to Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye.

"An EO adopting fiscal discipline measures is now in the works," Bunye said in his weekly View from the Palace. "These measures are expected to generate savings that will in turn be earmarked for the most vital and urgent pro-poor projects."

Bunye said the decision was also based on making the Government Electronic Procurement System mandatory in the purchase of goods and services to ensure that the government would get the best price.

Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin said the EO would target savings of 10 percent in government-owned-and-controlled-corporations.

For example, she said, the government was aiming to achieve P900 million in savings from its fuel and electricity bills, which amounted to P4 billion last year.

Boncodin said the EO was aimed at contributing a substantial portion of the P20 billion in additional savings mandated by the President in her appeal to Congress to approve her proposed tax package that would generate P80 billion in new revenues.

At the top of Ms Arroyo's proposed cost-cutting measures are the adoption of a system that will computerize government employees with additional time or days for illegal overtime work and putting a cap on area and additional benefits for officials and employees.

The other measures being considered by the President and her economic managers are curbing foreign and local travel by government officials and employees, and the adoption of a system that will computerize government employees with additional time or days for illegal overtime work and putting a cap on area and additional benefits for officials and employees.

The other measures being considered by the President and her economic managers are curbing foreign and local travel by government officials and employees, and the adoption of a system that will computerize government employees with additional time or days for illegal overtime work and putting a cap on area and additional benefits for officials and employees.

WELCOME ovenator President Macapagal-Arroyo is see. She is praying at the San Agustin Church in her hometown of Lubao, Pampanga, which continues to be inundated by flood waters from last week's heavy rains.

Pampanga folk learn to cope with disaster

By Tonette Orejas
PDI Central Luzon Desk
and PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

LUBAO, Pampanga—For people who survived one of the world's biggest volcanic eruptions of the 20th century, the floods that ravaged 30 of Pampanga's 20 towns this week did not seem like a terrible enough calamity that would break their spirits.

At 6 o'clock yesterday morning in Barangay San Luis in Lubao, 27-year-old Jay Cayob squatted by a "lagoon" formed by overflowing fishponds and choking only water lilies, and threw out his pancake. Gamitan hook with plastic string), hoping for a bite.

Before the morning was over, his pail was filled with three kilos of tilapia. He only problem was what to do with them.

"This is enough for the day. We can do with this. Thank God for floods," the lucky father of seven—known to his townmates by his nickname "Bombardo"—told this reporter.

Kapampangans, whose ancestors were river dwellers who settled in the middle of the basin-shaped Central Luzon region, have developed ways of coping with natural disasters.

There are even not some 1.5 years ago when Mount Pinatubo erupted, burying portions of Lubao and villages under tons of lahar.

CONTINUED ON A-10

FACT BOX

Deaths and destruction
- Dead: 70
- Injured: 4
- Landslides: 17
- Affected city, towns: 1 (Angeles City), 3 (Lubao, Porac, Guagua)
- Barangays affected: 20
- Pampanga is primarily agricultural province
- Damage to agriculture and fisheries, as of Friday, P376 million
- Affected provinces (aside from Pampanga): Nueva Ecija, Bataan, Bulacan, Rizal, Metro Manila, La Union, Pangasinan, Tarlac, Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, Aurora, Quezon, Batangas, Laguna, Cavite, Zambales, Bataan, Bulacan, Rizal

Filipino jin blows chance for silver medal in semis

By Antonio T. Bagtas Jr.
Sports Editor

ATHENS—Glory came tantalizingly close Saturday before slipping from the grasp of the young girl raised with the enormous silver ambition (the country's first ever gold medal in the Olympic Games.

Mary Antoinette Rivero lost a heartbreaking heartstopping decision in a hard fought victory in a debut that ended the Philippines' run for a gold medal in the 2004 Olympiad at the Ano Liosia Sports Pavilion here.

Rivero, at 16 the youngest Olympian in the Philippine team, went down, 3-2, to Hanoor Myrtalidou in the semifinals of the women's under-47 kilogram category.

After two quick victories in the first two rounds Saturday, Rivero had put the Philippines on the verge of the medal tally with a very realistic chance for either a silver or a gold.

PLEASE GO TO A-11

2 PDI reporters bag business journalism awards

TWO INQUIRER business reporters bagged major awards during the 13th Economic Journalist Association of the Philippines Globe-Tolentino-Ramirez Journalism awards held at Rizal International Hotel in Makati Wednesday night.

Iloria Dumlao and Clarissa Batino were named "Best Reporter of the Year" in their respective beats in 2003, namely, the Securities and Exchange Commission-Philip-

CONTINUED ON A-10

There's now an ombudsman for green plants

By Ma. Cleta P. Reyes

THERE is something green to rave about.

Now there is a government office that will receive and investigate complaints on erring persons or groups and, more important, government officials who fail to protect the environment or cause harm to Mother Earth through negligence, tolerance or connivance.

The Philippines' environmental ombudsman, lawyer Pilbert L. Casabesa, is said to be the first of his kind in the world. The new agency he represents was spawned by the growing concern of environmental vigilantes and lobbyists over the wanton destruction of the country's natural resources and habitats and its people's apathy and neglect.

Casabesa, subdirector in the DENR Law Chief

WITH an environmental ombudsman now in place, there's a good chance that those responsible for the recent cutting of thousands of young trees at the Manila Seedling Bank in Quezon City will be prosecuted. For now, innocents make the ravaged land their playground.

Opposition wary of GMA 'super pork'

By Michael Lim Ubac

MANDAUE, to vote in the pork barrel of legislators and senators and the allocation of local government units would give GMA monopoly and control over public funds in Pres. Macapagal-Arroyo who had no "moral right" in the money, watched Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr.

"If the intention is to place all the money within the control of the President so that she can manipulate the disbursement of funds of the country by her own will, then no opposition for promise because I do not think that the President has any moral authority over us on the money of all boating funds," the senator said.

CONTINUED ON A-10

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

SUNDAY, AUGUST 29, 2004

Second FRONTPAGE

WEATHER FORECAST

Palace blinks; IRA to stay at '04 level

By Dec. Cabuenas Jr.
and Delfin T. Mallari Jr.
PDI Anchors Luzon Bureau

MALACAÑANG now wants to freeze at its current level, instead of cutting back, the internal revenue allotments (IRA) of local governments (LGUs) amid snowballing resistance from governors and mayors to President Macapagal-Arroyo's plan to get a chunk of their funds to avert a fiscal crisis.

Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin said that maintaining the current level of the IRA at P1.02 billion next year would still free up P18 billion in funds which the government could save/fund other projects.

The IRA—where the LGUs get 40 centavos of every peso the government collects in taxes—is projected to rise to P131 billion next year.

Boncodin said that pegging the IRA at the current P1.02 billion level would be more palatable to the provinces, cities, towns and municipalities compared to the initial plan to reduce the IRA by up to a quarter or P31.20 billion, the maximum set under the Local Government Code.

Ariel Casilao, the president of the Quezon Municipal Mayors Association warned of chaos in the event the IRA for local government units was cut.

"There will be chaos all over the country," Candelaria Mayor David Enclina, also the provincial chair of the Quezon LMP, in Quezon, told the Inquirer in a phone interview. (See related story on Page A17.)

Enrique said Malacañang could not simply reduce or suspend the distribution of the IRA allocations for local governments.

"The Supreme Court had already declared it as unconstitutional," he said.

Enrique said that should the government slash the IRA, most local governments officials would resort to begging for funds just to serve their constituents.

He said the IRA is the main allotment to PGs' million and constitutes a big part of the town's annual budget of P776 million.

Ati Arroyo earlier admitted that the government was in a fiscal crisis. She suggested a reduction in the IRA which is allowed in times of unmanageable public sector deficit or the combined financing shortfall of the national government and state-owned companies.

Arroyo Rep. Jose Salvacion Quimbo-Rampil said that to tackle such a issue on the IRA, the government was also preparing to ask the LGUs to waive their 40 percent share of any new taxes that Congress might approve for the national government.

The President had endorsed eight tax measures to raise P80 billion in additional revenues for the government. Salceda said a source from the LGUs would allow the government to use the entire P80 billion to trim the budget deficit.

Salceda said this proposal—because of the measure was to generate immediate cash for the government, which is trying to meet the fiscal adjustment that GP recommendation predicted would occur within the next two to three years.

Aside the extraordinary measures to boost revenue level of state, Salceda stressed that the administration could only achieve its goal of a new budget deficit by 2009. The government aims to boost tax collection to 16 percent in the next five years while maintaining spending for government employees, social services and capital outlay at 2004 levels during the same period.

As this developed, Quezon Rep. Proceso Alcala (LP, 2nd Dist.) also proposed the phased reduction of congressmen's "pork barrel" or the Priority Development Assistance Fund.

"Those funds are the source of funding allocations for the delivery of basic social services to the remotest areas of the country. Those funds help or bring the government closer to the people," Alcala said.

He conceded, however, that should the certain House membership decide to cut their respective allocations. "We have to bow to the will of the national leadership for the sake of unity during this troubling times."

"The last thing that the people would expect from government officials during this crisis is the selfish choice of protection to make ourselves," Alcala said.

Private sector holds the key to fuel savings

By Abigail L. Ho

THE SUCCESS of the government's energy conservation program will depend largely on the cooperation of the private sector, which accounts for a very large percentage of the country's total oil and fuel consumption.

Data from the Department of Energy showed that some 1.4 million private and other nationwide account for 46 percent of the country's total fuel consumption annually.

Nationwide gasoline consumption is placed at four billion liters a year and diesel consumption at seven billion liters per year.

In the first five months of this year, total oil consumption reached 10.8 million barrels of oil. Of this, 37 percent was diesel; 22 percent, industrial oil; and 20 percent, unleaded gasoline.

Of the country's total oil consumption, the transport sector accounted for 68 percent; the industrial sector, 14 percent; residential, eight percent; commercial, seven percent; agricultural, two percent; and others, one percent.

The government aims to reduce total oil consumption by at least 22 million barrels of oil to generate some $504 million in foreign exchange savings each year.

DOE data showed that of the total oil consumption of the transport sector, land-based vehicles accounted for 90 percent; sea-based vehicles, seven percent; and air-based, three percent.

Among the land-based vehicles, 79 percent are private vehicles; 19 percent are "for hire" vehicles; two percent are government-owned vehicles.

Last year, the number of private vehicles plying the country's roads grew 2.5 percent to about 2.4 million from 2.3 million in 2002.

The number of government vehicles, on the other hand, jumped 17.7 percent to 68,347 in 2003 from 58,142 the year before.

Energy Secretary Vincent Perez has appealed to private vehicle owners to voluntarily adopt fuel conservation measures to help ensure the success of the government's drive to reduce fuel consumption.

Although the government accounts for only a small portion of nationwide transport fuel consumption, it has adopted fuel conservation measures to save on its billion.

President Macapagal-Arroyo has ordered all government agencies to reduce their fuel and electricity consumption by at least 10 percent.

The government's National Energy Efficiency and Conservation Program is now in place for at least six months, particularly with the advent of the winter months in the western countries and the possible further increase in international oil prices.

National government offices consume 70 billion worth of fuel and 91 billion worth of electricity each year.

A 10-percent reduction in consumption, therefore, will not only result in less fuel imports, but will also generate savings of at least P600 million for the government.

While the 10 percent energy conservation reduction is mandatory for government offices, it is not so for private companies and individuals.

But Perez said private citizens are being urged to voluntarily cooperate with the government in conserving energy.

"All of these are currently voluntary. We're still studying our options on mandatory implementation," he said. "We're still elaborating (the program). Right now, (compliance) is voluntary."

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
Sunday SPORTS

RARELY LOSE. Eduardo Buenavista will be ranged against 6 boxers in the 42K, 2nd leg event of the Olympics.

Tiny Buenavista needs big strides in marathon bid

ATHENS—Filipino long distance specialist Eduardo Buenavista ranked his bid in the marathon Sunday evening confident but uncertain how he'd end up in the final event of the 28th Olympic Games here.

"Dito kasalayan ako (Its a drama)," said the 26-year-old Silver runner from Santo Nino, South Cotabato. "I will give my best. Pero hindi ko alam kung paano ako magsimula (But I don't know how I will finish)."

Buenavista leads the Philippine record of 2 hours, 16 minutes and 44 seconds for the marathon. He set this during the Japan Marathoners Dai-Ichi Invitational.

"I'll try to improve that time," Buenavista promised in the run of the race which starts at 6 p.m. The marathon will re-trace the route of the race when it was held in the Modern Olympic Games here in 1896, ending at the Panathinaiko Stadium.

Buenavista also holds the national mark in the 3,000 steeplechase and the 5,000 and 10,000, but he decided to shift to marathon "dahil mas may laban ako dito at (I have a better chance here in the) international competition."

Asked if he would try to set the early pace, Buenavista said: "Hindi, maraming laro. Awatahuli naman ang atin (It's not realistic. It's not hard to do, but I don't think I'll be among the leaders)."

The last Olympic performance in the marathon was recorded by Portugal's Carlos Lopes in the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, when he clocked 2:09:55 (Montreal), Ireland's John Treacy 2:09:56 (LA, 1984), Great Britain's Dicklin Spedding, 2:09:04 (LA, 1984) and Ethiopia's Gezaghegne Abera, 2:45:11 (Sydney).

Five other Filipinos had competed in the Olympic marathon, but Buenavista, who is vying in his second Olympics, appears to have a good chance of producing the best performance among them.

They were Benjamin Abo-Bote (Mexico), Nilo Idava (Montreal), Leonardo Bal (Los Angeles), Ramon Suico (Barcelona) and Pen Reyes (Atlanta).

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House body cleared Smokey project in 2000 inquiry

THE HOUSE of Representatives' committee on good government had declared valid the contract for the Smokey Mountain Development and Reclamation Project as early as four years ago.

The same committee also concluded that its private investigator, R-B Builders Inc., was capable of handling the project.

The House inquiry, which raised similar issues raised by Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago in a recent privilege speech, concluded that the bidding process involved in awarding the controversial SMDRP to R-B in 1992 was legal and above-board.

The 2000 investigation done by the House committee on good government also concluded that R-B Builders owned by businessman Eugene Reyes "has the capability to undertake the project and has had this capability from the inception of the project."

Most advantageous

Contrary to Santiago's claims in her privilege speech that the SMDRP was grossly disadvantageous to the government, committee report No. 1283 dated Jan. 8, 2001, and the "Smokey Mountain Project Proposal of R-B Builders Inc. was considered to be the most advantageous to the government" as attested in a November 1990 study.

Santiago alleged that R-B initially incurred no risk in undertaking the SMDRP, but the Senate committee report cleared that the company actually shelled out at least P300 million to get the SMDRP going and agreed to be the last among the members of the project's asset pool to receive its share of whatever was left of the project.

The committee also unanimously edged that it would have been ridiculously difficult at this time to get investors to develop Smokey Mountain, which contained principally of garbage and undeveloped and reclaimed land.

The developers employed an innovative and creative financial concept——asset securitization——for the SMDRP.

"Although relatively new in the Philippines, this imaginative scheme has already gained worldwide acceptance and has actually been used by quite a number of financial institutions," the committee report said.

"Asset-backed securities have since become the standard financial instrument for financing projects in the Philippines. In fact, other major real estate development projects throughout the country like the Clark Special Economic Zone and Heritage Park at Fort Bonifacio have also resorted using similar financial instruments."

Santiago's claim that R-B failed in its obligation to fully finance the SMDRP was false, as shown by the committee report, because the failed to mention the means by which the government and R-B agreed to finance the project.

The committee report said the financial scheme drawn up by the government and R-B for the SMDRP had ensured that all funds generated would be used exclusively for, and in accordance with, the project because the money was held by a trustee bank and could not be touched by any of the members of the asset pool.

On Santiago's doubts over the ability of R-B Builders to finance the project, the House committee concluded that the equity invested by the company had been "at levels beyond the industry norm."

The House found nothing wrong with the bidding process involving the SMDRP saying it was awarded to R-B after determining that it was "financially and technically capable of handling the project."

Cold and wet, President Macapagal-Arroyo attends Mass at San Agustin Church in her hometown of Lubao, Pampanga, which was not spared by floodwaters. Later, clad in a raincoat and rubber boots, she's ready to meet some hail or high water

Pampanga folk learn to cope with disaster

From page A1

Yesterday, as creeks, canals, ponds and rivers overflowed from days of rains, thousands of men and boys united with parkour—some had fishing nets—set out from their homes in fish.

As happens every flooding season, the day turned into a virtual "feast of fish" for them.

Agriculture damage

At least 15 people have died in the wake of typhoons Marce and Elaba which triggered widespread flooding across Luzon. Most of the victims drowned in floods.

Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap placed at P1.5 million the total damage to agriculture and fisheries in Region 3 and 5 and in the Cordillera Administrative Region, as of Friday.

Along the same stretch of the Angat-San Fernando-Olongapo (ASO) Road, where Capili waited patiently for the fish to bite, Aida Cortez waded a foot inland. She chose this part of the highway because it was dry, unlike the center of town, where the public market was submerged by water.

"If I rely on what I make, my family would go hungry," she said, arranging her stocks of ube, tamarind and other fruits. "Selling is better."

Ten months Cortez, one of the oldest women in Pampanga, wanders built makeshift stalls or simply laid out their goods on sacks at the (Pantabangan) junction of the ASO Road.

Life must go on

The floods did not stop Susan Santos, a vegetable vendor, from doing business.

"Life is hard. I have to work, calamity or none," she told the reporter, her arch (regular customer) who followed her all the way from the old Guagua public market to buy canned fish (ginagang Lucas soup).

Her cousin Conrad Mallari felt the same way.

"This is our way of coping with floods...more so high grounds and still well. Life has to go on," he said.

As in Dagupan and Bacolor, boat owners in Sasmuan plied flooded roads, snubbing the usually reliable tricycles and jeepneys.

A short 500-meter P10, until Jonathan Santos, whose number hauls a one-way trips per day.

Even the floods could not discourage residents of Lubao from throwing a feast in honor of their patron, St. Augustine.

Carolina Andaral, 72, said many homes prepared special dishes to celebrate the day.

Ordered to attend Mass

"We're thankful that the calamity was not worse," she said.

Lubao's most prominent guest was no less than its own daughter, President Macapagal-Arroyo, who lived 10km in the town's hinterlands.

Ms. Arroyo's presidential aides attended the Mass, said he and other civil servants had been ordered by the local mayor to be in the church.

In Pampanga's fourth district, located off the coast of Manila Bay, residents evolved boats from styrofoam or from iron tire inner tubes, called a "balsa."

Roads were also converted into temporary kindness or wading areas. Windows become doors in the meantime. Beds turned into resident parking spaces for bicycles.

1.3 million affected

In Candaba town, floods meant hunting time for reptiles. But even in Lubao, tourists did not have to venture far.

Right in his house, their Mendoza caught an 8-foot-long python and ran to a neighborhood. He immediately hooked for a buyer.

But town on Kapampangan seemed to cope with the yearly floods. Gov. Mark Lapid urged them not to be complacent.

"It's good to be prepared for any eventuality," Lapid said.

The floods have affected about 1.3 million people in Luzon, including Metro Manila, local officials said. Evacuation centers, operating for relief supplies, stocks, food and hotel clearance.

A government report said the rice-growing provinces of Pangasinan and Nueva Ecija were the worst hit, with more than 600,000 people affected.

Some roads in Tarlac and the Cordillera, including Kennon Road, the Bontoc-Banaue Road, the Mt. Province-Ifugao Trail Road, the Abra-Ilocos Road and the Ilocos-Baguio Road, were closed to traffic due to landslides.

After five days of downpour, the sun finally shone in most parts of Northern and Central Luzon yesterday.

But floodwaters receded slowly and people still had to contend with two to three feet of water in their homes and farmlands.

Cost-cutting measures

In Pampanga, Ms. Arroyo met with mayors and released P10 million for the purchase of backhoes to dredge rivers and waterways still filled with lahar from Pinatubo's eruption.

"The President said the government could save a lot of money if the backhoes were government owned," said Lubao Mayor Dennis Pineda, president of the Pampanga Mayors' League.

Private contractors, he said, may not like the idea but his lawyers suggestion was practical and cost-saving.

Renting a backhoe costs almost P2 million, about the same amount needed for used equipment that the Department of Public Works and Highways plans to buy (Inquirer, 8/28).

The province's major rivers—Pasig-Potrero, Porac-Gumain and Abacan—and their tributaries, which all head out to the Pampanga River, remain filled with lahar.

According to the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology, Mt. Pinatubo spewed over 7 cubic kilometers of ash, sand and rocks flowing into washed them from the slopes of the Zambales mountain range and deposited them on the waterways.

Only half of that volume had been swept

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo gestures as she delivers a point to Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap aboard a police Humvee negotiating a flooded street in Lubao, Pampanga, on Saturday.

to the Pinatubo said.

At least 231 barangays of 109 villages in Pampanga remained under two to five feet of water. The floods affected 300,107 people, or almost a fourth of the province's population.

Predictors at work

Pampanga Gov. Victor Agbayani said 10,000 families were affected by floods in his province.

Provincial officials dismissed as the work of predictors are messages like a dam had been and that the lagos they had overflowed.

In Dagupan City, the Bonifacio-Quezon (an) and peninsula, considered road hazards during normal times, ruled the roads for passable by motorized vehicles.

Residents and fishing owners from nearby towns trooped to the city to buy commodities to and from the downtown area, which was still under two feet of water.

Mayor Benjamin Lim said the four bridges of the Abo of Binmaley River in the Barbosa-Gonzalez to Mangaldan town and the overlapping of the Abo of Mariano River in Calasiao-Dagupan caused the heavy flooding in the city.

The Philippine Air Force said nurse families were still isolated in Pantipal, Tarlac, following the breaching of the Cuhlingbang dike there on Friday.

It said rescuers aboard rubber boats saved at least 100 residents trapped by floodwaters in their homes in Pantipal.

In Bulacan, the floods destroyed at least P68 million worth of crops and infrastructure, Governor Josefina Jo San Miguel disclosed their losses under a state of calamity due to floodwaters that affected the town's crops.

San Miguel Mayor Edmundo Buencamino and water from denuded mountains and from the overflowing Bulo San inundated 18 barangays. The floodwaters reached five to eight feet in several villages in the town. With reports from Akiatic Papa, and Carmela Reyes, PDI Central Luzon Desk, and Yolanda Sotto-Austria, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Sunday, August 29, 2004
22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Sir 3:17-18, 20, 28-29

My son, conduct your affairs with discretion and you will be loved by those who are acceptable to God.

The greater you are, the more you should humble yourself and then you will find favor with God. For great is the power of the Lord and it is the humble who give him glory.

For the sufferings of the proud man there is no remedy, the roots of evil are implanted in him. The mind of a man reflects on proverbs. Whether attentive man desires a receptive ear.

Responsorial: Ps 68:4-5, 10-11, 22-23

When you have risen to a nothing throne to the saviour on boat of a blazing fire, darkness and gloom and storms, blasts of trumpets or tuba's sound that the people placed before you have no further word to speak.

But you came near to Mount Sion, to the city of the living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem with its innumerable angels: You have come to the solemn feast, the assembly of the firstborn of God, whose names are written in heaven. Throw it God, the spread-off, with the spittes of the upright brought to perfection. There is Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, with the sprinkled blood that cries out more effectively than Abel's.

Gospel: Lk 14:1, 7-14

One Sabbath Jesus had gone to eat a meal in the house of a leading Pharisee, and he was carefully watched.

Jesus then told a parable to the guests, for he had noticed how they tried to take the places of honor. And he said, "When you are invited to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor. Perhaps a person more important than you has been invited, and your host, who invited both of you, will come and say to you, 'Please give this person your place.' Then shame is your reward as you take the lowest seat!

"Whenever you are invited, go rather to the lowest seat, so that your host may come and say to you, 'My friend, move up higher.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all the other guests. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be raised."

Jesus also said to the man who had invited him and said, "When you give a lunch or a dinner, don't invite your friends, or your brothers and relatives and wealthy neighbors. We surely they will also invite you in return and you will be repaid. When you give a feast, invite instead the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind. Welcome are you then, because they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the Resurrection of the upright."

Commentary:

THOMAS Merton gave us this story by Chuang Tzu (3rd century B.C.):

"Chuang Tzu with his bamboo pole was fishing in Pu river. The Prince of Chu sent two civil officers with a formal document. 'My worthy superior you Prime Minister.' Chuang Tzu held his bamboo pole. Still watching its float, he said, 'I am told there is a sacred tortoise, offered and enshrined three thousand years ago, treasured by the prince, wrapped in silk, in a precious dress, in an altar in the temple. What do you think: is it better to give up one's life and leave a sacred shell as an object of cult in a chest of honor three thousand years, or better to live on in quite (while dragging its tail in the mud)?' 'For the turtle,' said the Vice-Chancellor. 'better to live and drag its tail in the mud!' 'Go home!' said Chuang Tzu. 'I, too, am here to drag my tail in the mud!'"

Christian Publications Inc., A Bayanihan Jr., 10th Bldg., Odiman, Quezon City, 10 P.O. Box 4, Odiman, 1100 Quezon City; Tel.: 411-3994; Fax: 411-3970; E-mail: cpi@cpi.com.ph; Website: http://www.cpi.com.ph; Director: Jay (Christian Publications Inc.) A http://www.cpi.com.ph (Catechism in the Philippines)

Private help, volunteerism key to SEAG hosting–Obet

THE BIG elements in the hosting of the 2005 Southeast Asian Games are complete private sector backing and the country's cultural spirit of volunteerism.

Roberto Pagdanganan, Philtoa (Philippine MAC Organizing Committee) chair, said these twin components are vital in the success of the SEAG after emerging from a meeting this week with Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin, who defined government's financial position for the event.

The Subic Tourism chief announced that he would lay down and inspire a policy based on investor/labor so as not to unnecessarily burden the national coffers.

"We all heard President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo declare that we are facing tough times financially. While we are determined to honor an international commitment, we are also one with the government in responding to domestic responsibilities," said Pagdanganan, the incoming chair and president of the Philippine International Trade Corp.

On instructions of President Arroyo, Pagdanganan exchanged notes with Boncodin to determine the course of action and find means to augment government's resources for the hosting of the biennial sports meet that could cost P1 billion.

Most of the expenses will go to the refurbishing of facilities and training of the national athletes who are under pressure to give the country its first overall championship in the biennial sportsfest among 10 Asean nations.

Quick to admit that efforts to internally private sector support campaign is the first option, Pagdanganan said Philtoa will host a summit among sports leaders involved in the preparation with the objective of pinpointing areas where resources can be tested, particularly in manpower.

The two other organizations working with Philtoa are the Philippine Sports Commission headed by Eric Buhain and the Philippine Olympic Committee under its president Jose Cojuangco Jr.

Picking up a vital lesson from his recent trip to the Athens Olympics where he represented the President, Pagdanganan cited the role of some 70,000 volunteers, including one in the immigration counter who was Akiko Thomson, who were chosen from a field of 160,000 local and international applicants.

"Our country is well known for the spirit of Bayanihan. We must be able to make this spirit dominate the Games," he said.

INFERIOR RP STYLE

Boxing gold doubly elusive after Athens

By Recah Trinidad

ATHENS—The terribly inferior fighting style displayed by the RP boxing team here could've indefinitely shut the door on the country's hope for an Olympic gold medal.

The boxing results, which bared that Filipino amateur fighters have stagnated while overall competition has improved by leaps and bounds, showed the elusive five boxing gold medal for the Philippines is currently unreachable.

Of the four RP boxers, not one was able to turn close to a medal finish in the most ludicrous manner since the high in the 1996 Athens Olympics where Brock Villanueva **missed the gold by a few lucrous** points.

The general view is that RP fighters, based on their crude, loose usual form, have remained weak in most primitives.

The dismal showing by RP in the Olympic boxing arena was made **doubly tragic by the tack ambitions** of the ISP head coach and his top fighter who both swore they did not know how and why they had lost.

Coach Ernesto Calleros was convinced in protesting the one-sided loss of light flyweight Mary Talisayon who himself would have he had landed more punches against his vastly superior Korean conqueror.

Take it from one who saw it close up at Hagalo: Talisayon lost because he was dearly outpunched and badly beaten in the Olympic arena where the accepted scoring norm puts emphasis on pin-point punching, not on power and the ability to hurt.

The debacle could mean the RP amateur boxing leadership has been rendered untenable.

There's the inevitable chance for a shake-up of the amateur boxing hierarchy in the Philippines.

But the Lopezes, the father-and-son tandem of amateur boxing head Manny and former media mogul Mel, could not be alarmed at the moment.

Orbanes sportsman Tony Aldegeuer, instantly tagged in circles as the best replacement for the current leaders, insists he's not interested in the position.

Aldegeuer, who runs the AGA studio in Cebu, boarding ground of many world class ring warriors, said he's more concerned about urgent changes in the national amateur boxing system.

Aldegeuer, from world boxing judge and boxers contemporaries believes Laguimbay in Cebu and Aldegeuer can more interested in helping effect necessary changes.

NAA humbly said the Lopezes are not the problem, but the amateur system. He's not accepting the post, but didn't also refuse suggestions to base the national amateur program in his gym," Laguimbay said in a text message from Cebu to Athens.

The elder Lopez, who made news of the hottest dating competition as his successor in the Olympic boxing policy board, has returned in Manila.

Manny Lopez will have to see the boxing program down to its last wrap finish.

It's not clear though whether or not his coaching staff or his boxers would be part of the Olympic delegation where they can get clear, pulsating demos on how to win in the Olympics courtesy of fighters from world boxing powers.

If the ISP coaches decided to watch the championships, they should get necessary information on why their style, although not exactly immature, has become greatly outdated.

HARRY Tanamor (left), the Philippines' best bet, could not even reach the boxing quarterfinals.

Stunning triumph for RP ice skaters

THE VICTORIOUS IM Philippine Ice Skating team. The skaters were accompanied by SMTS vice president for talent, engineer Mr. Cornelius and SM Skies' coaches Eric Nicolito, Arnaldo Marinas, Marlou Tabia, Arnel Rosado, Dave Aderson, Glen Quevara and Ray Bueno.

THE PHILIPPINE ice skating champions? Sounds improbable.

But a bunch of homegrown Filipino youngsters indeed showed up their counterparts from more-illed lands by grabbing the overall championship in the recent 2004 Ice Skating Institute of America (ISA) World Championships at the Johnson's Super Rink in Blaine, Minneapolis, in Minnesota, USA.

The SM Philippine Ice Skating Team, which included 43 skaters from the SM Megamall and SM Mandaluyong clubs, brought home 98 gold medals, 62 silvers and 26 bronzes to amass 776.2 points.

That proved enough to beat 86 teams from nine countries: the United Arab Emirates, Thailand, Mexico and the United States of America, which fielded teams from 29 states.

The White Bear Lake Spurs team of the US placed second with 686.3 points.

Coseteng grabs BRC lead

MULTITITLED driver Jody Coseteng capped the seventh and eighth rounds of the Philippine National Touring Car Championships to grab the lead in the premier S1 division at the Batangas Racing Circuit in Nasugbu, Batangas yesterday.

Coseteng, the four-time driver of the Year backed by Cullen Hamilton and Jun Miguel Dee, was so pumped up ahead his Honda Civic, that he went over primeur Dominic Roxas in Dyna 610 in a huge 33-second margin en route to a time of 25:22.185. In the same race, he had the fastest time of 1:40.774 in lap 6.

It was practically the same script in the seventh round, which Coseteng piled with a time of 29:01.869, clearing to the backseat Ben Uno, Philip Almeda Drill, Freddie Ong (4th) and previous overall leader Roy Rivera (5th).

"My focus is the championship. I need to earn more points to further increase my lead over my rivals," said Coseteng."

TOYOTA CUP WINNERS

Ivan Carapiet of Edgepoint (center) shares honors with Michelle Bonigar ver of Standard Insurance (left) as the Formula Toyota Cup of the launching of the 2004 PCSD-GrandPrix at the Batangas Racing Circuit. With them is third placer Gabby de la Merced.

What can be done for us to win an Olympic gold?

Textors text messages P provide in Tuesday's **InqBox** *we each name a Gayth staff by!)*

Key in: inquirer spt name/city/message
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(Maximum of 140 characters)

RM awardee bashes govt's approach to peace

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

ONE OF this year's Ramon Magsaysay awardees has criticized the government's approach to attaining peace in Mindanao, calling attention to the hundreds of thousands of families displaced by the area's decades-old conflict with Muslim rebels.

Benjamin Abadiano, who is being given the famed Magsaysay award for emergent leadership for his work in uplifting the plight of indigenous peoples, said peace negotiators were useless unless the government transformed "human security" into national security.

"Human security... operates from the notion that the security of people, particularly of those who are directly endangered in hinterlands, should be the highest priority of government in its conflict engagements with insurgent, separatist or terrorist organizations," Abadiano said.

"The government should focus more on improving the livelihood of people instead of buying arms," he said.

As executive director of Tebang Bindadanao since 2001, Abadiano has been assisting hundreds of thousands of people who were uprooted by the war between the military and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front to return home and rebuild their lives.

"The military has no exact count plan (for civilians in the battle zones); it has only military plans," he said.

At 41, Abadiano is the youngest of this year's seven awardees of the prestigious award that is considered Asia's equivalent of the Nobel Prize.

In his lecture last Friday at the Ramon Magsaysay Center in Manila, Abadiano quietly but passionately spoke of the awardees' fight for their right to a peaceful existence.

He cited his experience as grassroots peace-builder.

"Based on experience and reflection, when we talk of peace-building, it has to be out of the interests of the ethnic groups. If you have to negotiate peace, look at the other aspects of the human person. Hindi pag-nagugutom ang tao tapos sasabihin mo bawal kang umalis. Hindi pwede 'yon. (Because if a person is hungry, you cannot tell him to remain silent)," Abadiano stressed.

He said the "institutionalized injustice" against indigenous peoples (IPs) must be dismantled before there could be real peace.

He said institutionalized injustice is in the form of land-grabbing and ethnic cultural trash.

"(It) is no longer a matter of land-grabbing taking place in the name of irresponsible capitalist business and personal wealth creation. It is now about the IPs having no alternative but to abandon their homes for fear of being caught in the crossfire of war," he said.

"So if you talk of peace, it can't be purely peace. It has to be anchored on development, or else redundancy (eg coupon like reconciliation would prod)," he added.

Only three years ago, Abadiano had no idea how to go about negotiating with military and MILF commanders on behalf of the people displaced by the war.

In 2001, he was asked by the Asian Development Foundation to lead its efforts in Mindanao after his nine years' work among the Mangyans in Mindoro Oriental.

"We allowed the war measures to talk directly to the military to tell them what they wanted," Abadiano said.

He said the responses at first did not prod us to talk to the military for fear of losing access by being MILF supporters.

Abadiano said they also had to negotiate with the Muslim rebels, which they had to keep secret from the military "or else we might be suspected of being supporters."

He said getting the trust of the MILF was another story.

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Cops to wear 'kotong' pins in effort to stop extortion

By Christian V. Esguerra

CONDEMN kotong (extortion)—stick it with a pin.

The Philippine National Police has begun distributing anti-kotong pins among its 113,000 men in an effort to flush out extortionists in the ranks.

The round pins bear the word kotong with a bold red slash over it. They will be worn initially by 15,000 officers of the National Capital Region Police Office.

Hopefully, the pins will help curb the problem.

"They will serve as a reminder of an existing campaign. Besides, it will be hard to engage in extortion when you're wearing an anti-kotong pin on your uniform," NCRPO Director Avelino Razon told the Inquirer.

The pins will also discourage the public from corrupting policemen into committing the illegal activity, said Razon, pointing out that since Kotong Control Method (KCM) is a cooperative effort of non-police members.

Soon all PNP officers, from PNP Director General Edgardo Aglipay to the lowest patrolman, will be wearing the pins—a strong show of unity against the bugaw (hoe) has been tarnishing the image of the national police force.

"We want policemen to regain the people's respect," Razon told reporters during a tour of NCRPO units Friday.

The PNP will also deploy "honesty" teams specifically tasked to spy on their kotong and holdup (another form of extortion) counterparts.

The idea came from Chief Supt. Vidal Querol, Central Luzon police director, who started the program as soon as Interior and Local Government Secretary Angelo Reyes ordered a crackdown last month.

In the expanded strategy, honesty teams will each be composed of five "upright" officers who will wear the civilian for "cogon" policemen. Armed with guns and radio equipment, they will ride in undercover motorcycles.

"We will deploy as many honesty teams as possible," Razon said.

In the period July 19 to Aug. 22, the PNP arrested 31 officers for illegal involvement in extortion activities. Three officers were charged criminally, 26 administratively and two are still under investigation.

The PNP has also forged ties with the Catholic Church and other religious denominations in another important battle, this time against illegal drugs.

Speaking before the First Cotabato Diocesan Meeting on Community Safety and Security held at the Cotta Palace, Archbishop Orlando Quevedo, Diocesan Administrator of Kidapawan and Pidol and 17 members of the Office of Social Concerns Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) regarding the PNP's proposal to include anti-drug education in church-run schools.

Loaded of the laborers in Bicol and the Bicolandia they advocate Church-Bicolano expressed their support for the PNP's request.

"It is imperative that all of us work together to solve this problem," the PNP chief said.

Aglipay noted that because the Catholic Church had direct influence over 80 percent of the country's population, the cooperation of its officials was very important. PNS With Ma'ri Barrios, PNI Southern Luzon Bureau

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STOP BAD BREATH NOW!

US animal rights group decries Davao horsefights

By Jonathan Belang

AN INFLUENTIAL animal rights group in the United States has launched a letter drive to stop horsefighting in the Philippines, in particular, Davao City's carnival Kadayawan festival.

People for Ethical Treatment of Animals (Peta), which is based in Norfolk, Virginia, has urged its members and supporters to write or e-mail the Philippine Embassy in Washington D.C. and Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte to end horsefighting.

"Horsefighting is rooted in gambling and greed. Organizers make two stallions compete in mass with a cluster who is in front. The losing horse becomes aggressive and kick, bite and gouge each other until one flees or collapses," Peta said in its advisory.

It added that horses were often ill, matched, and many of them were slaughtered after sustaining "terrible injuries."

"To help stop horsefighting in the Philippines, contact Mayor Rodrigo Duterte and politely tell him that you won't be visiting what he calls the 'Most Peaceful City in the Philippines' until it's peaceful for horses, too," Peta said.

The organization noted that horsefighting was illegal in the Philippines under Republic Act 8485, also known as the Philippine Animal Welfare Act. The Philippine Animal Welfare Society (PAWS) called reports of horsefights were banned during the Kadayawan festival on Aug. 20.

Peta has more than 800,000 members and claims to be the largest animal rights organization in the world. Founded in 1980, it is dedicated to establishing and protecting the rights of all animals.

In its website, Peta says it "operates under the simple principle that animals are not ours to eat, wear, experiment on, or use for entertainment."

The group focuses its attention on four areas in which the largest numbers of animals suffer the most intensely for the largest periods of time: factory farms, in laboratories, under the trade, and in the entertainment industry. It works on a variety of other issues, including the cruel killing of bunnies, birds and other "pests," and the abuse of backyard dogs.

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ON CUE 3

Pagulayan faces Wei in opener

ALEX Pagulayan, who recently reacquired his Filipino citizenship, is a top favorite for the $20,000 championship's opener in the 3-day event featuring 16 of the world's best cue artists.

RESIGNING world pool champion Alex Pagulayan and the Taiwanese he beat for the championship last month in Taipei will clash today to open the "On Cue 3: Continental Conquest" billiards tournament at the Galleria Trade Hall, fourth level of the Robinsons Galleria.

The Manila-based Pagulayan, who has recently reacquired Filipino citizenship, tangles with Cheng Hsi-ming at 10:30 a.m. followed by another explosive match pitting Efren "Bata" Reyes against Sweden's Marcus Chamat.

Both matches will be telecast live at Studio 23. Featuring 16 of the world's best cue artists, the three-day event is organized by ABS-CBN Sports in partnership with Pyxis Sports.

It is actually the third major billiards event after the 49'ers Challenge staged as part of ABS-CBN's 56th anniversary and the Battle of Champions 180 vs Kamper II's last year.

Four of the country's world-caliber cue masters—Reyes, Francisco "Django" Bustamante, Antonio Gabica and Lee Van Corteza—will match skills with the best players from South America, Europe and Asia.

ABS-CBN's top honcho Gabby Lopez has put up a total cash purse of $50,000. The champion gets the top prize of $20,000 cash with $10,000 going to the runners-up. The third and fourth players will receive $5,000 each while $2,000 each goes to the fifth to eighth players.

"We've gathered only the world's best billiards players in bringing to the Philippines the biggest sports spectacle (they shouldn't miss," said ABS-CBN VP for Sports Peter Mangay.

Competition starts after the ceremonial rig at 10 a.m.

Much of the country's hopes are pinned on Reyes and Bustamante.

Reyes, considered the greatest billiards player in the world, is best remembered for his side feat in the 1999 World Pool Championship in Cardiff, Wales. Bustamante, who bagged the 2003 International Challenge of Champions crown, is currently ranked No. 1 in the World Pool-Billiard Association (WPA).

Tickets are available at the Robinsons Galleria. P600 for VIP seats and P200 for Standard seats on Aug. 29 and 30, and P500 for VIP and P300 for Standard on Aug. 31.

Bibat, Manotoc show mettle in Putra Cup

By Manny R. Castillo

LEPO Rayssel, Indonesia—Young stars Michael Bibat and Matthew Manotoc were using golf to accomplish diverse goals.

Bibat, who turns 20 next month, couldn't wait to get out of high school so that he can start making a career out of golf.

Manotoc, 15, took up golf again to have the best chance of getting a collegiate scholarship in the United States.

They now share one thing in common after the Putra Cup where they tied their respective individual teams to fourth place finishes in the meet that is officially the final meet from their championships.

Uncut diamonds who turned out to be test pilots, Bibat and Manotoc came up with worthy performances that signaled the coming of new talents for the future's taut.

BIBAT

With the veterans sitting pretty, Bibat turned in a five-under card in the final two rounds to total up-five 6 to the behind-the-clubs.

Before Tommy also hit the same way of blunders, who shot a five-under 67 to the third round to finish fourth in the individual junior race, just one stroke shy of a medal.

"Three guys are nationals," the elder Manotoc said. "They have the heart of a fighter to begin with and they love to play living tournaments like this."

Bibat and Manotoc played their first international event in the seven-nation tournament, embracing the challenge and playing through it with the point of mission.

It seems Manotoc is taking the safer way to life and Bibat is gambling with it.

But one thing seems to be certain. The way they played here, both will be wearing the national colors more before they achieve what they both are set to do.

Eagle Ridge Invitational stakes Nissan X-Trail

A HANDSOME Nissan X-Trail worth more than a million pesos tops the prizes to be dispensed to and off the winners in the second staging of the Eagle Ridge Invitational, the member-guest tournament of the country's biggest golf complex in Gen. Trias, Cavite, on Sept. 25-26.

The Michelin hosted the Eagle Ridge members and their invited guest partners will be played at the Fidda and Sycamore courses with prizes totaling more than P1 million on the line.

Registration is now going on at Eagle Ridge with an entry fee of P7,000, inclusive of two practice rounds, two grand ball tickets, lunch& golf shirts, caps and balls, and dinner for the awarding ceremonies on Sept. 26.

Aside from the two Nissan X-Trail utility automatic that will be at stake as prizes for a hole-in-one on the eighth hole of Northmeet No. 2 of Fidda, a medical weekend for two, selling car will be raffled off.

Sponsoring this year's Eagle Ridge Invitational are Manila Bancshare, Whitehorse, Mandarin Oriental, Hilton Resort, Prime Infrastructure, 888 Medical Plaza, Jacinto Bistro, Universal Travel, Golf Library, Passport, Tiger Lee, WG Construction, G-Shop, ELCC, Prince and Global Outsourcing.

Eagle Ridge golf setup is Modified Stableford with full handicaps applied. The maximum handicap for all-entries is 27 with points required to establish their latest and lowest handicap certified by GS.

To be disputed are the teams award for their overall division is based on the average handicaps of the two members.

Breaking into Formula 1 motorsport difficult—Pastor

TOM Pastor, president of the Philippine Formula Autosports Foundation Inc. that launches the racing program of his two sons, including 2003 Asian Formula Renault champion Elio Pastor, said that breaking into Formula 1 is extremely tall for Filipino tots.

"Getting into Formula 1 is like going through the eye of a needle whether you are coming for a seat as a test driver or as a team's. The process is tough and also very expensive," said Pastor, after arranging for a possible test drive.

Pastor will look into a driver's credentials very closely and they must have a solid record as far as experience and results are concerned. For instance, the Avalon F1 team says that only drivers who have finished first or second place in at least three races ahead of the 20 drivers contending races and who have won a major championship across are considered for an F1 test, and eventually a permanent seat.

Must be age of a driver must be between 25 years old and not more than 27 years old for Asian drivers.

For inquiries log on to www.fi-dream.com.ph and www.racingphilippines.com.ph.

SPEED Pastor (right) executes a good test to make it to the tough Formula One circuit despite certain requirements.

Ifs

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendiola

I MISSED what could have been a memorable trip to Surrey, England, in October and that's because I made a 7 at the par-4 17th of the Manila Golf Club. I need to share this regretsome with you if only to emphasize once more the tough nature of golf, if not to elicit self-pity.

Or not.

OK, the details.

For 16 holes, I had just had a 7 that day by any standards among duffers like me, that was something to be proud of. Why, I landed on the 18th tee!

Golf is a difficult a game you need total concentration for a minimum of four hours to be able to emerge from the game fully satisfied.

On 17, my tee shot was almost perfect. "Ito dun sumuko ng all the middle," sa golfers here to say when they see a good tee shot.

But even better was my second shot—it landed just maybe 20 yards from the green.

You know, we were coming off here the championship tees. Like we were playing Manila Golf Club is really long when you hit from its championship tees. And the greens, well, the Bobo Dark teams isn't patients, what with its up-and-down, almost roller coaster design. We were playing mines golf style. And because of into the night before, the course played longer because of the soggy fairways.

Still, I couldn't complain. For 16 holes and two shots from the 17th tee, it was heaven.

Then it happened.

I missed my fourth shot, blank. Look up. Duay. The ball drifted some 10 feet away, near the bunker.

Five-on. Two putts.

It it's any consolation, I bagged the par-5 13th after recovering from a poor drive.

After engaging quick my see-sold bet do of here. I took my shower. Despite that 7 on 17, I felt happy. My heart was even being pitched by something. I couldn't explain when. I walked out of the lockers.

At the second intermission, the pitching betting was unearthed. Over the championship, by two strokes. Before Chong had won the HSBC Golf tournament and were awarded a pair of business class tickets from Cathay Pacific to London Heathrow. HSBC top honcho Warren Manning will play host to former and his Jules(??) in the HSBC World Match Play in October at the Wentworth Golf Club in Surrey where Ernie Els is the defending champion. Bonus: she won a complimentary set of HSBC World Match Play branded irons, which Lene Serrano had so meticulously assembled before she left the tournament for a mission in Hong Kong. And me, on your hearts say, billion, for Rotten also took home a Johnnie Walker Blue.

Now going back to that 7 on 17.

Imagine if I had only done 5 in that hole, which wasn't difficult at all. As I said, I was just maybe 20 yards away from the green after. I addressed my third shot.

And I landed on the green and proceeded to make par, which was really very realistically possible. I could have saved by one.

And if I bogeyed it, which was really achievable if you know what I mean, I could have still won it on the second inch.

It just wasn't my day, and there's nobody to blame but me. I lost my concentration after having savored being discussed from the rest of the world for 3 hours and 45 minutes. In seconds, the bubble burst.

Such is golf that you can't really afford to lose your focus for just a single second. That's why in as many ways, this game is really the game of inches and not yards, of dimensions and not distance.

This is also a game filled with ifs.

If I had not made a 7.

...

HAYBREAK. Jun Velasco, Oliver Gun Chua and Jun Duterte will shape the Philippine Golf Challenge Cup Showdown in Dagupan City on Sept. 12, featuring the nation's top cyclists like Ariel Quevlant, Ryan Tanguilig and Victor Espiritu, among others. The Intrepidus Agency Games, will crescendo the cycling marathon and a weekend triathlon on top of the Mayor Benjie Gil Cup. Lito Alvarez of Inflix is also into this noble project that will help showcase the celebrities plans to project. Dagupan's Tondali gas beach as the future home of a world class port and marina.

SPORTSWATCH

Return bout for Gorres

MEETING boxing champion is to show for December when promoter Sammy "Boy King" Gello-ani manages the "Palace of the 7" promotion at Manila's City Sports Complex on Sept. 4. The event will feature the first comeback fight of 7 "the Dream" Gorres at the Cebu arena after a year of inactivity as well as the return of Filipino Cecilio Pagkalinawan. The lightly 29-year-old Roman did away with a fighting life a year in Indonesia and Australia where he notched up a 1-2-1 win-loss-draw record. Aragao made his last appearance in Cebu by stopping Jun Lumpad 4 in two rounds at the Cebu City Sports Complex in December last year. In regain boxing, the 18-fight veteran Aragao is matched by Indonesia's Ali Ghozali. Gorres' last win was when he beat Jaggie de Oro and fights under the ribbon of Nick Galvez. A victory would find him as far a title shot against the current champion Bobby Pacquiao. For reservations, call Palace or Gorres at (032) 5401400 or 0917 4274134 and 504 1...

0000 Edwin Lagumbay, Contributor

Suico OPBF defense

MANILA, and Pacific Boxing Federation super bantamweight champion Rodel "Kennedy Boy" Suico will defend his OPBF title against Indonesia's Ibrahim Klabo on Oct. 23 at the Lapu Lapu Arena Complex. The dynamite Team Suico, also known as the Kennedy Boy, an MBC No. 2 following his controversial loss to South African Mzukisi Sauzaal May, will be making the third defense of the OPBF crown he won in Pusan, Korea in a unanimous decision over Korean Sang-Ho Yuh. Ronald Zaldivar earned the 12-round bout with Arnaiz, the Mandaue City knockout fighter will meet Ruby Rigos in a grudge rematch with wins for the loser to be recalled PBC. Bronze as reigning champion 6 Montalvo is expected to move up to the lightweight category in his talent match with Marco Antonio Barrera on Dec. 27. Montalvo, who carries 21-1 win-loss record with 16 knockouts, is expected to complete his training for the against Barrera, who possesses an 58-7-2 win-loss-draw record with 8 KOs. Promoter Jim "Bobby" Salud, who has originally slated the event on Oct. 16, said that the rematch fight on the 27th was decided upon by the governing the World Boxing Association's 83rd Annual Convention on Macau on Oct. 13-16.

Edwin Lagumbay, Contributor

7-stag derby Aug. 31

A CLEARANCE confirmation of help from cockers will be the main feat of Sunday, 29's SC 7-Stag Derby. The exclusive system of 7 derby will be held at the Araneta Coliseum auditorium Aug. 31 and Sept. 2. National Cockers Confederation (NCC) president Dr. Federico Lachtman the confirmation of cockfighting heavyweights like Sandiag Cojuangco, Eduardo Cojuangco, Ramon Aguilar, Peping Cojuangco, Cuting Sequera, Jun Santiago, Philip Ortenglican, Bebop Consunji, Hammond Velayo, GMA president Patricia Arroyo, Jimmy Lopez, Ad Interior Jun Ringpis and Cardinal Cubao Cockers Association. Also coming actors are Ray Valen, Johnny Delgado, Tony Mabesa, Joel Lamangan, Joe Gruta, Dong Anyol and Lemuel de la Cruz, Primetime Brothers of Lumbangan, Davao Region Cockers, DND Reservists, Pete and Ricardo Bautista, Tito Bob Plana and Eddie Cayabyab. Participants are expected to hurl their best to gain an early upper hand in the Mid-Stag Highrise of the Year race.

Showdown derby set

THE 2nd Showdown Derby for staging on Sept. 5 at 1 and 4 p.m. Child Manalastas—Qing Sotto is expected to be another action-packed event with no less than 140 fierce encounters that 3,000 stags hosted. Competitions, headed by Carney Ty, lawyer Ramona Fajardo Jeanette Aguirre with Mitch Valera as commissioner. Prizes to be sponsored by Restaurant Excellente, Lakpau Bing and Connie Hipolito. Ray Shwedrowe will present the most popular cockers and breeders' from all over the country. Confirmed to participate are Pol Fernandez, Joey and Rolando de los Santos, Marvin Dominico, Tatay Gamboa, Jimmy Sanchez, Boy Marcos and Rodolfo Cruz, Boy Vachon, Chito Lim, Tony Lacdal, Tony Bautista, Ramon Ang, Ben Chua, Boy Reyes, Ramon Mamemoore, Allan Diaz and Boy Alcantara, Erwin Diamante, Jeff and Joel Fernando, Rep. Ronnie Ligtas, Arnold Mendoza, William Go, Mayor Rubby Arquiza, Mike Romualdo, Placido Mapa, Jun Figueroa, Rony Tan, Vice Gov. Lambino, Arnel Ejercito, Roy Cruz, Elton Chua, Gabriel Pastrana, R. Villarosa, Enrique Maranan, Sonny Reyes, and the group of Gov. Tony Rios of Bukidnon.

Public works execs want geologist, PDI cited for contempt

By Armand N. Macatol and Tonette Orejas
PDI Correspondent/Luzon Desk

PUBLIC works officials charged with graft for the allegedly faulty Pili Bikol-to-Buhi-Iyang-Iyang have asked the Sandiganbayan to cite geologist Edwin Bedolla and the Philippine Daily Inquirer for "contempt of court" for purportedly violating a court order for hearings to be held in camera.

In a motion filed on Aug. 26, the officials' lawyers said Bedolla and an Inquirer reporter were liable for allegedly violating prohibition of the article "in an attempt to influence" the outcome of cases in a decision.

The lawyers in the Aug. 26 issue of Bedolla's testimony at the Aug. 24 hearing on the case in the Sandiganbayan.

Bedolla, a "trained surgeon" and labor expert who was presented as a prosecution witness, testified that the failure of the respondents to study the behavior of lahar—the landslide of soil, volcanic deposits—and conduct a risk hazard of lahar deposits led to the breaching of the dike in 1998.

Bedolla, a mining professor at geology at the University of the Philippines, said it was not the onslaught of lahar that destroyed a portion of the P5-billion megadike but "strategic water" accumulated behind the dike following heavy rains in 1998.

The PHI Megadike functions as a catchment for the highly destructive lahar deposits that flowed into the river of Mayon Volcano during the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo in 1991.

In an interview after the hearing, Bedolla insisted that a lahar dike was a tragedy waiting to happen.

Those charged for the breaching of the dike were Department of Public Works design officials Bayani C. Lorenzo, Gregorio Cacho, Aida Santiago, Pedro Trocino, Ramon Velasquez, Gilbert Reyes, Dionisio de Guzman and Raymund Adriano. The case is being heard by the Sandiganbayan's 1st Division.

The 9th Division is hearing a separate case against Secretary Simeon Wesley Secretary Pimentel, Jose Mari Lopez, private contractor Jose Lim of Atlantic Erectors, and several others for the allegedly dishonest construction of the dike.

In an earlier interview, Enriquez, who supervised the construction of the dike as head of the Mt. Mayon Rehabilitation Project Management Office, said he had no liability for the breaching of the dike as his role in the project was "minimal."

The lawyers claimed in their motion that the case was "still subjudice" since the defense had yet to present its side and the court had yet to hand down a decision.

The rule on sub judice prohibits the public discussion of the merits of the case in a manner that will influence the decision of the court.

"Because of the sub judice(d) prayer in such still serving nonsensical, the accused by the lawyer may not only prejudged guilty by the trading public," the motion said.

During the hearing, the lawyers sought to intervene the defense lawyers as well as the defendants but their refusal to speak in court and asked the trial not to refer about the hearing.

The hearing of the contempt motion has been set for Aug. 31.

Yesterday, Bedolla was in Pampanga's capital city of San Fernando during students to be on the alert for the megadike.

Bedolla, who always visits the province during the rainy season to monitor the state of the megadike, observed that the lahar hitting the base of the San Antonio and Mallwala sections of the 20-km. U-shaped dike was already filled.

"This is not good and so the residents should always be on the alert," he said.

TIPS FOR SAVING ENERGY
President Arroyo holds up one of the stickers designed to promote energy conservation in the face of the energy-artificial crisis hounding the country, at yesterday's Pulong Bayan held at the Pandacan oil depot in Manila. With the President are Manila Mayor Lito Atienza and comedienne Gloria Sevilla who emceed the affair. See stories on Pages A-1 and A-23.
PCO/MALACAÑANG

Silliman marks 103rd, cites grads

THE 103rd Silliman University Founders Day celebration, spread over Aug. 3-30, was highlighted by the conferring of Outstanding Silliman(ian) Awards to graduates who had made claims in their respective fields.

This year's awardees were Consuelo C. Bendijo, for marketing management; Bishop Rolando M. Gomez Jr., for pastoral ministry and religious life; Rufino "Sonok" Inocian, theater and literature; Estefanio Jun, advocacy and outreach in nursing; Prof. Priscilla Lasmarias-Kabo, education; Dr. Edmundo A. Pamoso, counseling ministry and Dr. Rowena Tiempo Revotillas, in science and creative writing.

They were honored with a centennial review by the Mt. Hibok-Hibok, a convocation and a luncheon on Aug. 30.

Silliman was founded in Dumaguete City on Aug. 30, 1901. Its creation was made possible by a grant from Horace B. Silliman of New York City. The university system procedure is Dr. Agustin Pulido while the chair of the board of trustees is former National Treasurer Jaime H. Ongpin.

Rolly Talens Jovanes more declared by outstanding alumni working and living abroad. Hon. Dr. Belview J. Agoot spoke on "The Same-Sex Marriage Controversy: A Pro-Christ Perspective." Dr. Monina Isaacs Clergymen." Dr. Priscilla Lasmarias-Kabo talked on "Spirituality and Teaching: Education as Transformation," while Reynaldo Ramos addressed "How to Develop an Expressive, yet Sound Workplace."

The thanksgiving worship service at the El Fun Triangle had Dr. Shelia Raet, former BU board of trustees member, as speaker. Rev. Edmund Ibanga, this year's outstanding alumnus, was the 9 a.m. worship speaker at the Silliman University Church while he also served as pastor for so many years.

Sports activities included competitions in swimming, lawn tennis, archery, volleyball, soccer and basketball.

George N. Whitson delivered a one-man exhibit of Silliman landscapes en canvas. Prof. Jesse Nole Zuzuca launched her books, Choral Conducting Exercise Techniques and How to Make a Difference. A choral clinic with the Manila Concert Choir to coordinate with the College of Performing Arts, the University School and the Negros Oriental Conference will be held on Aug. 30.

Solons back Baja at UN

MORE than 60 congressmen led by Rep. Antonio Cuenco of Cebu and Rep. Constantino Acosta of Capiz's 1st Dist. Cong. chair and vice chair of the House committee on foreign affairs, respectively, have backed the selection of Ambassador Lauro Baja Jr. as Philippine Permanent Representative to the United Nations.

In a letter to President Macapagal-Arroyo, the solons said national interests demanded that the credibility and respect achieved by the Philippines at the UN and the Security Council, in particular, should not be disrupted by a change in its representative who has fulfilled all requirements of experience, skills and more.

Such a change would be viewed by the international community as a lack of sincerity and purpose on the part of the Philippines in its membership in the UN, they said.

Former acting Foreign Affairs Secretary Delia Albert, who was replaced by Alberto Romulo in the recent shakeup in the Cabinet, had reportedly expressed a wish to be appointed as the permanent representative to the UN.

Baja represents the country in the Security Council as well. He presided over the council in June when it was the Philippines' turn to head the SC.

His ambassadorship was recommended by both UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and General Assembly president Julian Hunte. It was during his watch that the Security Council adopted Resolution 1540 on the granting of emergency to Iraq.

In a press briefing in Congress, Cuenco said that because of the "importance of continuity and seniority of Philippine diplomacy, which should be above political expediency, we respectfully request the President to grant Ambassador Baja the opportunity to complete his one-of-a-kind which demands considerable and special expertise and experience in multilateral negotiations and consensus building strategies."

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Tuberculosis bugs military personnel

By Blanche S. Rivera

MANILA (AFP) – Dozens of the Philippines' brave men—and women—in uniform have been battling a silent killer in the country, infected with tuberculosis (TB) bacteria, a military official said Sunday.

Speaking at the 12th annual symposium of the Philippine Coalition Against Tuberculosis, AFP medical specialist Lt. Col. Antonio Lastimado said the military found it had its share infected personnel, reportedly members of the Army, because they were very mobile.

Philippine Army soldiers topped the list of tuberculosis patients from the military, accounting for 469 of the 820 tuberculosis cases in the AFP last year and 194 of the 256 cases this year.

Lastimado, chief of the AFP preventive medicine unit, said tuberculosis remained among the top 10 causes of morbidity or sickness in the force.

"I am really scared, a bit worried, when the proximity rate among the military is so big—two percent per 1,000 men—and they're supposed to be fit," said Health Undersecretary Antonio Lopez, reacting to Lastimado's presentation.

"We have to take note of the military's lifestyle. Many of them are smokers and drinkers," Lopez said.

Last year, 68 personnel from the Navy, 16 from the Air Force and 287 from AFP Medical Services Support Units were found to have tuberculosis. This year, 37 from the Navy, 28 from Air Force and 269 from AFPMSSU have tuberculosis.

The AFP has around 113,000 members, 35,000 of them in the Army, which might explain the greater percentage of cases in that branch.

Lastimado said the AFP had only been "passively" monitoring the tuberculosis cases in the military although it has shifted from direct X-ray exams to sputum smears to determine if soldiers had tuberculosis.

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Maid with deformity sues HK employer

HONG KONG—A Filipino maid is suing her former Hong Kong employer he fining her because she had three deformed fingers, her lawyer said Saturday.

Geberalee Mahlin Aquino, 44, told the court Friday her former boss Barry So began mistreating her after she discovered the deformity in Aquino's right hand three days into the job, said her lawyer David McKenzie from.

Aquino, of Naguanuan, "told the court her employer's family used foul language to harass her, and attempted to force her to quit but she refused.

Aquino enrolled three months later, he said.

Aquino also claimed he fined her whenever she made mistakes, including HK$50 (US$6) for not cleaning the refrigerator door properly.

McKenzie then said Aquino recently lapsed in orderly cleaning her, and he read out an affidavit to court in court.

Aquino is claiming about HK$170,000 (US2 million) in damages, McKenzie from said. AP

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No more dole-outs from Malacañang

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

PRESIDENT Macapagal Arroyo's offer to cut her take nearly P1 billion a year from Social Fund, in proposing to use the reductions to the congressional pork barrel would mean that there would be no money for dole-outs and sponsorships from Malacañang, the Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin said that people should draw stop turning to Malacañang for donations because the President would have less money to give out if her Social Fund was slashed.

Mrs. Arroyo has said that to her first three years in office she had been slashing her Social Fund which she said amounted to P1 billion.

She added to her intelligence fund of P1.2 billion a year, the President actually has at her disposal more than P2 billion in discretionary funds.

This is roughly equivalent to a tenth of the P20 billion congressional Priority Development Assistance Fund that the government regularly allocates to fund projects of legislators to ingratiate themselves with their constituents.

The Social Fund's main source of money is the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp., the state-run gaming monopoly that allocates 5 percent of its annual income to the Fund. Aguinst some P1.23 billion in 2003, P1.1 billion in 2002, and P475 million in 2001, or an average of P900 million a year, to the President's fund.

In the 2005 national budget that she submitted to Congress this month, the President basically asked legislators for a 40 percent reduction in their PDAF—to P43 million from P50 million for each senator—to help her deal with the fiscal crisis.

The cuts in the congressional pork barrel would yield P0.7 bil. basis for the national government.

While several legislators have offered to make said cuts pave up their pork barrel entirely, some have loudly called for the President to also forgo her social and intelligence funds.

Administration Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile said that if the President wanted the public to make sacrifices, then she should share in the burden and give up her "pagan-tasan" pork barrel.

"It cannot be a one-way street. Otherwise she will fall in her appeal," he said.

In a statement yesterday the President said: "We appreciate the offers of sacrifice from both houses of Congress and we assure our people that the executive branch is prepared to do its share in concrete and meaningful ways."

But in his weekly commentary, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said the savings from the President's Social Fund "would not be enough to alleviate our fiscal situation."

Bunye stressed that the Social Fund was an off-budget item and would not affect the national government's fiscal position. "one way or the other."

As for the reductions or abolition of the President's intelligence fund as proposed by opposition Sen. Panfilo Lacson, Boncodin said it would be up to Congress to decide whether to cut or outlay it out of the 2005 budget.

But Boncodin noted that it was during Lacson's stint as chief of the Philippine National Police during the short-lived administration of ousted President Joseph Estrada that the intelligence fund was increased substantially.

Boncodin said that from only P100 million during the Ramos administration, the presidential intelligence fund jumped to P500 million under Estrada, when Lacson was running the national police organization.

FLOOD victims of Pasiqui, Tarlac, are given hot noodle soup and bibs alike for the soul. PHOTO BY NOEL PABALATE

Gov't to cut perks, trips, overtime pay

Primary page A1

vernment officials paid media advertisements; training, seminars and workshops; celebrations and sports activities not related to the functions of agencies; donations, grants and gifts; and the hiring of consultants.

'Difference for the better'

In her inaugural speech at the Quirino Grandstand in Manila on June 30, the President said: "I pledge to you a government that will live within its means and put every quiet peso to real work. I pledge to reduce spending where the government does not work and increase it where the government can make a difference for the better."

The payroll of the 1.2 million people employed by the government alone. Excluding the 300,000 in government-owned and controlled corporations) accounts for 32 percent of the proposed budget for 2005 (or P680.37 billion, the second highest cost item). Maintenance expenses account for 10 percent (or P6.71 billion).

Mrs. Arroyo was prepared to come out with more concrete measures of her government's austerity program after she was criticized for supposedly giving too little while demanding too much from the public. Instead of proposed new taxes and fees, lawmakers and local government officials (in terms of cutbacks in pork barrel funds and the Internal Revenue Allotment). (See related story on Page A2.)

In a statement he issued on 9/11 day, Bunye announced that the executive department would lead the way of sacrifice during these tough times.

'Equal sharing'

"The President's call for the lawmakers to exercise austerity measures will be equally shared by the departments and agencies under the executive branch, the Office of the President included," Bunye said, adding:

"Whatever funds are in reserve will be used for the most critical and urgent pro-poor projects. The nation must be like one house and one home, where everybody carries the burden when crisis strikes." With a report from Ariel Ludwig Arevalo

New DENR chief says construction firm may be made to 'pay' for bulldozing trees

By Veh C. Contreras

DESIGNATE Environment Secretary Michael Defensor yesterday ordered a leading financial outfit in this town isn't by calling for a probe into the Manila Bowling Bank Foundation's completion over the destruction of its reservation for a construction crane last week.

Defensor, who will formally take over the Department of Environment and Natural Resources on Tuesday said that if proven certain, the construction company "may be required to replace the saplings or plant new trees as part of its responsibility to the country."

The former housing adviser has been news frequenting the DENR office in Quezon City the past week for "bowling" sessions with his predecessor, Elisea Gozun.

He showed up unannounced at the DENR press center yesterday following an "initial inspection" of the DENR compound as the corner of Edsa and Quezon Avenue.

The DENR has filed a complaint of malicious mischief with the police against a bulldozing crew of San Juan Builders Inc. for razing the saplings during a land clearing operation on Aug. 23. The crew allegedly went to work "without prior notice" to the Foundation.

The ruined plants—2,936 saplings, to be exact—cost around P1.21 million, said MR. BP president Chris Bocol.

In an interview Friday, Bocol admitted that the plants were growing outside the MR-BP officially awarded property to the national, however, that the 27-year-old foundation had been "allowed" to use the surrounding land which was owned by the National Housing Authority.

He argued that even if the current had exceeded its boundaries, MRBP still deserved to be notified by San Juan Builders about the bulldozing operations.

The plants could have been saved, he said.

The NHA, however, denied Bocol's claim that there was no prior notice sent. It also stressed that the foundation was already "encroaching" on the land which the NHA had recently leased to San Juan Builders to be developed into a commercial center and has terminated.

Opposition wary of GMA 'super pork'

Primary page A1

Also declaring last week that the country was in the middle of a fiscal crisis, the President asked senators and congresspeople to agree to a 40 percent cut in their 2005 Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF), known as the pork barrel.

That's more carving responses from legislators, with some agreeing to a partial cut, others to an outright surrender and still others to a dash on reinforcing the Mr. Arroyo give up part of her own pork barrel. (See related story.)

While claiming that he himself was not against giving up a part of his P300-million-a-year pork barrel share, Pimentel proceeded to name all the reasons why he might be loath to give up his part of the pork.

He said the issue was the President's credibility.

"The President has lost the moral ascendancy to assert that power after squandering billions of pesos of taxpayers' money on her election campaign which has almost rendered the national treasury empty," he said.

Pimentel demanded that the Arroyo account for the funds that some allegedly directed to her health maintenance, employment, student loan program and "feeding on Batangas" or supposedly pensions her candidacy last thing. "For which she is now facing a string of plunder charges before the Office of the Ombudsman."

By giving up the pork, the members of Congress would be giving up the privilege of identifying and recommending for funding development projects in communities "whose needs are neglected by the executive branch," Pimentel also argued.

He said the abuses committed in the handling of the pork barrel funds would not be narrowed by reducing total control in the disbursement of the funds to the President.

Pimentel also objected to Malacañang's wanting to reduce the internal revenue allotments (IRA) of local government units by about P20 billion. He said this was an arbitrary and retrogressive move that would negate the supposed gains in local autonomy that have enabled local governments to do partially liberated from "over-dependence on the goodwill of the occupant in Malacañang."

"I only wish to make sure that the resources of government are not misused solely for the election of the President because, otherwise, we will have a very powerful President who can control the very lives of the people which is the very antithesis to a democratic government," he said.

Although some opposition senators have already decided to forgo their entire 2005 pork barrel, the minority bloc in the Senate has yet to reach a consensus on the issue, according to Sen. Jinggoy Estrada.

Estrada earlier said that he was agreeable to the proposal to reduce or even abolish the pork barrel so long as "all lawmakers will agree as that everybody will carry the burdens of the government's austerity program."

Senator Estrada, opposition Senators Panfilo Lacson and Sergio Osmeña III said they would give up their pork.

Sen. Edgardo Angara said he was willing to give up his share "if that's necessary to save the country." He said Mrs. Arroyo should also give up her pork barrel to set an example.

Angara said that if Senate President Franklin Drilon could get all senators to follow suit, "then I think there will be no problem among the opposition."

Nine administration senators signed a resolution early this week expressing their willingness to slash their 2005 PDAF Drilon and Senators Francis Pangilinan, Ramon Revilla Jr. and Lito Lapid later announced they would give up 100 percent of their pork.

At Malacañang, Deputy Executive Legislative Secretary Jay Ruiz reiterated they would accept the cuts but only if everyone else in Congress does the same.

"The sacrifice should start from the President down to the lowest official," said Bacolod City Rep. Monico Puentevella.

Puentevella also has an additional condition—that the halved pork be given outright. He said that under current practice, allocations for projects that go to different government agencies are not released outright.

"It can take a year or longer for approved projects to reach beneficiaries," he said.

Rep. Evangelino Carmona said he was willing to accept the cuts on condition that the amounts to be slashed would be discussed with the House member in the mill where the projects to them delayed.

Reps. Alfredo Maulion III said he was willing to do his part but stressed that the legislators really needed their pork.

"That is all right for congressmen in rich districts but not for those in the poor ones and constituents that have leaking school buildings, roads that need to be fixed and farmers that need help," Maulion said.

Rep. Jose Carlos Lacson said the House majority has scheduled a caucus on Monday to discuss the cuts.

Rep. Ignacio Arroyo Jr., the President's brother-in-law, said he would also agree to the cut if everyone else did. "We should all step in and help us long as everyone does their fair share," he said.

Two congressmen meanwhile asked administration foes Juliet Arroyo to stop blaming the President for the fiscal crisis and instead help her carry an economic meltdown by giving her the benefit of his advice on how to save and raise money to ease the deficit.

Davao Oriental Rep. Joel Mayo Almario and Isabela Rep. Edwin Uy said these was no truth to Arroyo's charge that Malacañang had exceeded the government's alleged borrowing binge in the past three years.

Almario said Mr. Arroyo has always been "transparent and honest" about the country's financial health, including government borrowings, since the assumed office in 2001.

He explained that the government had to resort to domestic and foreign borrowings to cover shortfalls in revenue collection where much of the funds for government projects and programs come from.

Uy said the government's borrowings have always gained non-grassland sometime during the annual budget hearings.

He said that Congress has every right for lawmakers to check on government expenditures, including payments for foreign and local loans.

"This is not the time for finger-pointing and blaming. What the nation needs now are quick action, support from everyone and faith in the leadership of the President. Our selfless sacrifice is the key to averting the fiscal crisis from happening in two or three years," Uy said. With reports from Cynthia D. Balana and Phil Hoga in Davao

2 PDI reporters bag business journalism awards

Primary page A1

BETINO

DUMLAO

pine Stock Exchange and Banking/Finance, respectively.

The Ilpp-Globe Telecom annual awards aim to encourage the development of business journalism in the country by giving recognition to business reporters who have produced accurate, timely and relevant economic stories.

The Inquirer took two of the six awards for "Reporter of the Year" in writers Ibarlene Betino-Zobel Antonette Acosta-Dumlao (Social Banner of Manila Standard) [Trade and Industry]; Lester Levinson of Today (Energy), Mandaluyong Tabloid of Business world (Telecommunications), and Raoul Dela of Philippine Star (Agribusiness).

The "Banner Story of the Year" was awarded to Businessworld's "Controversies Heard" [Energy], Philippine Star's "Fraud Alleged" [Telecommunications] and Manila Bulletin's "Bank Scandal" [Banking/Finance].

Receiving the awards last Wednesday night at the Manila Hotel were Betino, Dumlao, Levinson, Acosta, Dela, Ma. Cristina Padolina of Businessworld, Jose Ma. Nolasco of Philippine Star, Ma. Cristina Arao of Manila Bulletin, Ma. Cristina Alcuaz of Manila Standard

Defeat gives US lessons to ponder on

ATHENS—Do you believe in mirages?

The myth that the NBA could pick 12 guys based on availability and monster publicity and still mop up a basketball floor with the rest of the world is finally shaken (thankfully) and shattered (hopefully).

With this latest version of Team USA, getting "run out" of the Olympics was always a matter of when, not if. Maybe nobody would have predicted a month ago that it'd lose once (gasp!) in a single tournament (but US teams lost in the previous 88 years basketball has been played on the planet).

But it wasn't surprised by Argentina (6), USA 81 mind have told their TV set shortly after Michael Jordan retired for 1993.

If so, everything you needed to know about what's wrong with NBA basketball ever since was made all too apparent in a 20-minute span at the end of the third quarter Friday night.

After Team USA pulled within 66-57, Argentina brought the ball down the floor and ran guard Manu Ginobili through a series of screens. It required the coordinated movement of bodies and ball that a couple of international play, but something you rarely see in the league anymore.

So it was no surprise that US guard Dwayne Wayne, Ginobili's defensive shadow, simply stood crashing through the final one and jumped up, nothing was him to stand—just as the Argentine (and fan favorite Jason) also let fly with a 3-pointer that hit nothing but net.

Lost art

Ginobili then completed a four-point play by making his freethrows—another lost art in the NBA—and suddenly Argentina was ahead by 16. One possession later, after teammate Carlos Delfino grabbed a long rebound off a missed Argentina shot and fired a quick outlet pass to Wade on the wing, he took off from the three on full speed.

Getting back on defense is yet another lost art in the NBA, but nobody told that to the four Argentine defenders who raced up the court alongside Wade. Determined to produce one of those NBA highlight-reel moves, Wade soaked fearlessly into the thicket. He never got the shot off. Wade had his pocket picked.

Give the NBA guys credit for something. They grumbled a little about not getting breaks, and the chance to do Larry Brown's name to something on an offending computer is against Ten Donnie, his boss player, was this. "I save every game and I don't know if there was any pattern—other than getting him to the bench."

Then again, they hardly needed excuses once Ginobili started talking.

"I don't think the rest of the world has reached the level of the United States," he said. "Everybody wants to do their best against the United States so, it's really hard for those guys."

Ginobili was part of the Argentina squad that crushed the US at the unofficial Pan NBA all-star collections rounding to at least USA at the 2002 world championships, and he repeated something he said then.

"It be sure for them to rest, they have to bring their best."

It's probably true that if Shaquille O'Neal, Kevin Garnett, Baby Bryant and Tracy McGrady acquired for duty, the result would have been different.

That very idea prompted Allen Iverson to practically plead with some of his far more happy counterparts to show up—next time, to remember how they got to be and happy to the first place.

Horse

"Understand first and foremost that it's an honor to be on a team like this," he said.

But that still misses the point. These guys don't lose to theoretic stars. They lose to better teams.

That's going to happen more and more, unless NBA teams learn how to play together again.

Coach/commissioner Gentil Stern spoke at half-time about how, once the league ventured into the international arena, it knew one like this were coming.

What Friday night proved is that he should have thought of it sooner. AP

STUCK by a splendid wake-up call, Allen Iverson and the rest of Team USA will have to content their sojourn... and priorities. AFP

SPRINGS! Ginobili helped lower the curtain on the US dominance in Olympic basketball, scoring 19 points in an 89-81 win that ousted the Americans. AFP

BASKETBALL

Argentina ends American reign

ATHENS—Just 12 years after Michael Jordan and the United States Dream Team rolled to Olympic basketball gold, Argentina and Italy are living the dream and all that's left for Americans is a make-up call.

Argentina suffered the most humiliating moment in American basketball history upon a United States squad of National Basketball Association stars, dethroning them 89-81 here Friday.

Emanuel Ginobili, a guard for the NBA San Antonio Spurs, teamed 29 points to propel the South American to Saturday's Olympic gold medal game against Italy, which stunned previously unbeaten Lithuania, 100-91.

"We proved to the world we're a very tough team, and we made it against the professionals," Ginobili said. "Now we have to try and get the gold medal. That is the target...the top player and the gold medal. That is what we deserve."

The first collection of NBA riders since 1992 not to claim Olympic gold, the American field a dismal 4-2 percent from the field, drawing a US Olympic that produced 32 percent marks 16% from three-point Athens.

"We fought as hard as we could," US co-captain Allen Iverson said. "We just couldn't get it done."

A US Lithuania marching representative he for gold will be played for Greece to avoid. Lithuanians have settled for bronze in the past three Games.

A US team that has lost three times in seven Olympic games—51-71 to Puerto Rico in the opener and 94-96 to Lithuania in round-robin play—could become the first American team that failed to win an Olympic medal.

"We need to understand that even if we're not fighting for the gold medal, we still represent our country and fight like it was a gold medal game," Iverson said. "It's important to make the people back home proud of us."

That might not be possible after their golden flops, but the US team sent up the flames when several top stars rejected Olympic overtures. Iverson had a message for them—get yourselves into USA uniforms for the 2008 Beijing Games.

"You are supposed to approach it as an honor," Iverson said. "Not many people get a chance in the part of life."

Argentina clinched a first-ever basketball medal by reaching the final while Italy led by 31 points from Gianluca Basile and 16 from captain Giacomo Galanda, were in only medal, a silver, in the boycott-marred 1980 Moscow Games.

"This is the best day of my life," Galanda said. "I don't know how we did it. It's incredible. Amazing."

The only US Olympic losses prior to Athens were to the Soviet Union in a controversial 1972 Munich final and a 1988 bronze semifinal.

"It's clear they never letters done on," Anthony said. "But we know we are better than some."

"Americans are always saying they have the best team," countered Argentine guard Juan Sanchez. "But they haven't so prove it inside the court."

Ginobili, only 15 when Michael Jordan led the 1992 US Dream Team to Olympic gold, hit 8-of-15 shots, including 4-of-6 3-base pointers. As a team, Argentina shot 54 percent, hitting 13-of-22 three-pointers.

"The NBA title we were with the figure is very big," he said. "But to win a gold medal in the Olympics, when you represent your country and have 35 million people back home cheering you, is really special. About time words for it."

"Ginobili is a great player. He's an even better competitor," US assistant coach and NBA San Antonio coach Gregg Popovich said. "He combined both and did a great job."

At the finish, Jose donned "24" while Argentina team danced with joy while the Americans dejectedly walked out. AFP

Cubans put seven boxers in gold hunt

ATHENS—Cuba put seven of their eight boxers into the weekend's Olympic boxing finals but a couple of 17-year-olds stole the Friday semifinal show.

The Caribbean country is seeking to equal its seven boxing golds they won in the 1992 Barcelona Games, the most by any nation in a non-boycotted Games.

Only three Cubans have failed to win a semifinal bout.

Light welterweight Yuriorkis Gamboa from Holland to surprise Kazakhstan's Serik Yeleuov to reach Sunday's lightweight (60-kg) final.

The 17-year-old will face 31-year-old Cuban defending champion Mario Kindelan in the final. Angiar Velitchkov, who is six days younger than Kindelan the youngest medal winner he had a century, stunned double world champion Sergey Kuzkin to reach the light flyweight (48-kg) final.

The Istanbul teenager does not have the easy Kiaw processes but he was just as confident of beating the Ukrainian for the gold. The Cuban came from behind to beat Jose Manuel Abreu.

Cuba's dual would have brought (54-kg) champion Mario Kindelan both against Yuriorkis Gamboa in three rounds and will fight Ukrai Zaurov of Belarus in Sunday's final.

Yuriorkis Gamboa beats Jerome Thomas of France, the 2001 world champion and 2000 world championships silver medalist, in the fly-weight (51-kg) final.

Cubans southpaw Vadel Johnson beats Thailand's Manus Boonjumnong in Saturday's light welterweight (64-kg) final.

Thailand got was once in the finals when Olympic Pitchkhoom scored a unanimous win over world featherweight (54-kg) champion Agbaje Wasiu under of Azerbaijan.

He fights defending champion Guillermo Rigondeaux of Cuba in Sunday's final. AFP

Amid men's loss, women shoot for glory

ATHENS—At first glance, it would seem to be the perfect matchup, a must-win for you will.

Within United States has to do at stake a date Greenlight gold rematch vs. women's basketball on Saturday is best Australia, which is 8-12 against US teams in the Olympics and world championships.

No worries then, right chance? Hardly.

"This is our biggest test of the year," United States coach Van Chancellor said. "They're playing great. We've got to play."

A rematch of the 2000 gold medal game in Sydney—a 76-54 US victory—was rumored when normally reserved Lisa Leslie, 30, 75, on Friday's semifinals. The theatre got another big game from Lauren Jackson (26 points, 13 rebounds) and double-figure scoring from four others.

If only it were that easy for the United States, which had to dare its way past Russia, 66-62, the first time the street team have been pushed to the end in three games. The US players said it was just nerves that they traveled going into the final game, but it showed that with patience and solid interior defense, it's possible to give the Americans some problems.

"We're quietly confident that we can do it," Australia's Shelda Bellan said. AP

Tearful Jones blows medal bid

ATHENS—Marion Jones is going home without a medal.

Winner of five medals and a possible the biggest star of the Athens Games from seven sign, five American finished fifth in Friday's long jump and—barely one knee later—arrive out with the US 4x100 relay team.

Jones ran the second leg and was trying to hand over the baton to Lauryn Williams when Williams had taken off too soon and never managed to grab it, leaving the American out of the race.

"Wait up! Wait up!" Jones screamed as she desperately tossed Williams the baton. Williams, long her younger teammate and 100-meter silver medalist on the third attempt.

By then Williams was already out of the handoff zone. She stopped running, and Jones put her arm around Williams as the two walked to the end of the track.

Jones clutched Williams' hand tightly and tears trickled down Jones' face when she was asked later about her Olympic experience.

"It was a tough one," she said, breaking into more tears. "I just couldn't get the baton to Lauryn, and it didn't happen today.

"It was an extremely disappointing performance for me. It exposed a lot of my relative inexperience in the sport," Jones said. "I learned for great things this year. It didn't happen for me and it didn't happen for the team this year."

With the three-time out, Jamaica took the gold in 41.73 seconds, Russia was second in 42.27 and France won the bronze in 42.54.

It was a historic night for China, the host nation of the next Olympics, which in 2008 which got four gold medals one host apart.

Liu Xiang became the first Chinese man to get an Olympic gold, in exhibition when he equaled the world record in the 110-meter hurdles in 12.91 seconds. Hou Xiang Nation captured the women's 20,000.

Thursday Mark set an Olympic record at 5.95 meters to take at a 1-2-3 US finish in the pole vault, with Toby Stevenson taking the silver at 5.90. AP

PASSION Jones (right) embraces teammate Lauryn Williams. AFP

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SPORTS

The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Guico

Russia: Terror behind jet crash; group owns attack

MOSCOW—Russia said Friday "terrorists" were behind a passenger jet crash, as an Islamic group vowing support for Chechnya rebels claimed responsibility for that attack and the downing of another airliner as almost the same moment.

"According to our initial investigation, an hour one of the air crafts... came as a result of a terror attack," a spokesman for Russia's FSB intelligence service was quoted as saying by Russian news agencies.

The spokesperson, Sergei Ignatchenko, announced that investigators had discovered traces of hexogen, a powerful explosive with both military and civilian uses, in the wreckage of one of two planes that crashed almost simultaneously Tuesday.

Hexogen was identified by Russian authorities in 1999 as the explosive used in a series of apartment building blasts that killed around 300 people, an attack cited by Russian President Vladimir Putin as justification for invading Chechnya.

Ignatchenko said no similar evidence of terrorism had yet been found in the wreckage of the other plane.

There was also no official assertion of a link between the air crashes and attacks in the town of Mozdok in Russian republic of Chechnya, who have vowed to take their five-year guerrilla war against Russian troops into the country's main cities.

Officials acknowledged however that they were investigating possible connections with Chechnya, where elections scheduled in the fortnight were due Sunday.

One official said that the remains of a female passenger thought to be a resident of Chechnya who had been on one of two Russian planes were being closely examined for traces of explosive.

A spokesperson for the ministry of emergency situations said the passenger's remains were more badly damaged and more widely scattered on the ground than any others.

Investigators also said they were looking for information on another female passenger aboard the other plane, identified by Russian news agencies only by her family name, Dzhokhanova, also thought to be of Chechen origin.

Interest in the two women was heightened by the fact that no family or friends had yet come forward to identify their bodies, the reports said. AFP

A WOMAN wraps a shawl around her head as she stands at the door of a basement where her relative was identified as a victim of the TU-134 aircraft crash, Aug. 26. AFP

Iraq's leading Shiite clerics meet in Najaf

NAJAF, Iraq—Iraq's top Shiite Muslim clerics, back in control of Najaf's Imam Ali shrine after a four-month militia occupation, met amid the ruins of the city on Saturday as life appeared back to normality.

But in the main northern city of Mosul, a senior women academic was shot dead by unknown gunmen as she drove to her university department, police said.

Iman Abdul Khaleem Hasan, head of translation at Mosul University's College of Art, died instantly when gunmen drew up alongside her in a car and opened fire, before speeding off, said Major Falah Hassan.

The 36-year-old had complained of receiving death threats, Hassan added.

In Najaf the main headwaters were again clogged with traffic as shops reopened and residents whose homes were pummelled to dust scuttled with fury as radical cleric Moqtada Sadr let his down sarah battle against US led troops.

Iraq's revered Shiite spiritual leader, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, who forced Sadr to end the conflict and quit the Imam Ali shrine, met in his home with Grand Ayatollah Mohammed Said al-Hakim and Ishaq al-Fayad for 30 minutes.

"They congratulated Ali Sistani for his recovery from medical treatment abroad and he thanked God for preserving them from the danger in the holy city during those such difficult days," said Ghazanfar Rupaie, sensitive named Shafiq.

The elderly Iranian-born cleric avoided was greeted a 24-hour ceasefire by Baghdad and the US military on Thursday to secure into accord in the standoff.

A spokesperson had said the clerics would discuss ways to halt, one day after Sadr's supporters quit the shrine, one of the most important in Shiite Islam, and returned its keys to the religious authorities known as the Marjaiya.

Sistani's office has already called for an immediate inquiry into the shooting of supporters trying to get into the holy city on the same day as rebels disarm were killed on roars from the twin city of Irbil.

With the once glorious pl. gateway to the school of ruins, the task of reconstruction is enormous, for the interim government, from whom Sistani has also demanded compensation for those who suffered in the assault.

Peace continued for a second day, but the 80th Army has refused to surrender its weapons to Iraqi authorities, defying one of three conditions laid down by the caretaker government for halting its US-backed assault on the militia. AFP

Moore hits Bush in open letter

NEW YORK... Controversial filmmaker Michael Moore has released the first ever Democratic presidential **Imperial John Kerry's** Vietnam war record with a sarcastic worded open letter to President George W. Bush accusing him of "attacking a weaponless hero."

"I Voted Bad George to Desert Your Post and Then Attack a Wounded Vet," is the opening salvo of the letter, dated Thursday by the movie whose Bush-bashing documentary "Fahrenheit 9/11" was a box office blockbuster in the US last month of its winning the coveted **Palme d'Or** prize at the Cannes Film Festival.

The letter ancient **Bush of John** is a sneering group that has questioned Kerry's bravery and record in Vietnam, which he was awarded three **bronze** and awarded Silver and Bronze Stars for **valor.**

Bush and his campaign from distant are **connection** with the group, called "**Bush** Bad Veterans for **Truth.**" The president has described Kerry's Vietnam service as ad**mirable** but has declined to specifically condemn the attack ads.

"When it comes to pointing out other men's military records, there is no one who can touch your presence," Moore said in the letter posted on his website (**www.michaelmoore.com**).

Moore accused Bush of using the same tactic with his rival in the 2000 Republican primaries, Vietnam veteran Sen. John McCain, and with former Sen. Max Cleland, a triple amputee who lost his 2002 election bid following a campaign in which opposition groups released ads comparing him to **Osama bin Laden.** AFP

UN report says efforts to halt al-Qaida attacks not working

UNITED NATIONS—The threat of more al-Qaida terror attacks demands an organized global response but 10% fall sanctions and other measures are not working, according to a damning new report by experts at the United Nations.

The experts call into question many of the basic assumptions in the war on terror, including efforts to cut off the flow of money to would-be terrorists even though all but the most spectacular attacks, such as Sept. 11, can be carried out at little cost.

Meanwhile al-Qaida and its supporters are making effective use of the media to drum up support in the Muslim world, capitalizing on anger over the war in Iraq and countering efforts by a potentially devastating chemical or biological bomb attack, the report said.

Drafted by a panel of outside experts, it paints a bleak picture of countries either jeopardizing several steps behind international terrorists or unwilling to go beyond the basic paperwork required to demonstrate a good-faith effort to crack down on terror.

"The threat from al-Qaida-related terrorism remains as great as ever, but the nature of the threat has changed," said the report to the UN Security Council, which put in place the monitoring mechanism being evaluated by the high-level panel.

"There is no prospect of an early end to attacks from al-Qaida associated terrorism," it said. "Using minimal resources and exploiting worldwide publicity they have managed to create an international sense of crisis."

Efforts to block the sale of weapons and the movement of senior suspects...countermeasures at the UN sanctions regime against al-Qaida and Afghanistan's former Taliban rulers—have not been effective, the study said.

It recalled that the Security Council first determined that al-Qaida marked a united world response in October 1999...two years before the 2001 attacks on the United States that brought down the World Trade Center.

After Sept. 11, the council then passed a resolution requiring all UN member nations to freeze the assets, block arms sales and restrict the travel of any person or group believed to be linked to terrorism.

But the experts found that not even one nation had reported stopping either the travel or the sale of weapons to anyone on the UN list of those suspected of links to al-Qaida or the Taliban.

"Security Council sanctions aimed at stopping Taliban and al-Qaida terrorism have achieved 'less than was hoped,'" the report said. "This list has begun to lose credibility." Only 19 nations have cited any person or group linked to al-Qaida is on their soil, even though the number of nations where cells or groups operate is higher, the experts said, and just 34 countries have reported freezing assets.

Even then, they said, "in some cases it has been hard to tell what this means. It is not clear from all reports of asset freezing, for example, what those assets are, their value, or who owns them."

In Azerbaijan, only $80 in assets have been frozen. In Portugal, the figure is less than $10 million.

Chile's UN ambassador Heraldo Munoz, who chairs the committee overseeing the sanctions based on information submitted by governments, will give a press conference on the findings on Monday.

The report exposed other crucial flaws, including the craft on weapons that does not cover the tools used to "send" al-Qaida attacks.

It cited the March train bombings in Madrid, which relied on mobile phones and existing explosives not covered by the sanctions. AFP

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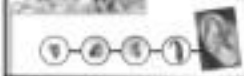

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IMMORTALIZED GEISHA
"Kuchibeni," an ink and color on paper hanging scroll created 1930-1931 by Goyo Serizawa, depicting a courtesan of Shimabara, on display at the Smithsonian's Freer Gallery of Art in Washington. AP

Pope returns icon to Russians

MOSCOW... Russian Orthodox Church Patriarch Alexy II took possession here Saturday of an icon considered so sacred by the Russian Orthodox church after it was re-stolen by Pope John Paul II in an ecumenical gesture to ease strained Orthodox-Roman Catholic relations.

But in a bungled ceremony at a cathedral inside the Kremlin walls, witnessed by an AFP reporter, the head of the Russian church also wanted the Vatican against compelled to Russia and said the Pope would not be welcome in the country at this time.

"We are grateful to the Pope, and we hope that Catholics and Orthodox would be supportive in Russia," the patriarch said during the ceremony to be received the famous 18th century icon, "Our Lady of Kazan," from papal envoy Cardinal Walter Kasper.

The artifact was spirited out of Russia in the 1920s after the Bolshevik revolution and has stood in Pope John Paul II's private apartments for more than a decade.

Asked after the ceremony if its return cleared the way for a visit to Russia by the 84-year-old Pontiff, Patriarch Alexy II responded in the negative.

"For the time being, conditions for a papal visit to Russia are not right," he said.

In an interview with Italy's Corriere della Sera daily published Friday, Alexy II blasted the Western Catholic and Protestant churches for proselytizing in traditionally Orthodox parts of the former Soviet Union. AFP

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OPINION

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In US politics, the gloves are off

REVELLE

Romeo J. Forteza

CHICAGO, Illinois—For the past three weeks, the dark side of US politics took center stage, holding the attention of many Americans voters over an issue that took place more than 30 years ago. Unlike Philippine politics, it had nothing to do with the citizenship qualifications of any of the candidates running for the presidency in November. It concerned the Vietnam War record of the democratic contender Sen. John Kerry of Massachusetts.

Late last week, at the Democratic convention in Boston, Kerry finally had service record in Vietnam thoroughly scrutinized to measure his campaign strategy against President Bush. It was a brilliant war record, a paradigm, former Sen. Max Cleland, who formally introduced him to the convention delegates, declared. Cleland, himself a triple amputee in Vietnam, was awarded a Silver Star for leading an assault on enemy units hiding in underbrush along the Bay-hap River, a Bronze Star for rescuing a fellow soldier who was mortally wounded during their separate encounters. He elected to return home after being wounded in action on those occasions and became a leading anti-war protester of the 1970s.

Cleland said, flush upon the war records of Air National Guard units in Texas and Alabama, assignments which were sponsored to relocate influential Democratic campaign supporters.

Kerry's record in Vietnam was also lauded by Swift Boat Veterans for Truth" same one with a political advertisement assailing the war record and integrity of Kerry. The ad portrayed him as having lied about his Vietnam experiences. In addition, a book titled "Unfit for Command" co-written by John O'Neill, also a former Swift Boat commander and Jerome Corsi, circulated freely, saying that his action in Vietnam were simply rather than courageous and that he had a penchant for fabricating stories to garner medals and citations.

What is remarkable about the attacks are by this group, considering the limited number of times in which they were used, is that they have generated so much debate and attention with talk show programs and cable news stories devoting much air time on the subject.

Although recent polls indicate some negative impact on the Kerry campaign, I find different to see any long-term advantage in the ads for the White House. The Republican claim that the veterans that freely assisted in the US navy and volunteered for Vietnam duty, winning five medals, while Bush remained in the United States in a non-combat unit with the Air National Guard. Even this passing has come under a cloud.

Both camps have come to exploit these attack ads. Under federal election regulations, Section 527, committees, terrorist political organizations are allowed provided no coordination of their activities carried out with official party campaign programs. Bush, the anti 527 group, Bushvets have called on Bush to condemn the ads produced by the Swift Boat People, but so far the Republicans, as reported, have denied any connection with the group and instead have countered that all 527 group ads should stop. These activities represent unofficial political "hit-and-run style" moves muddling the political waters for the media.

The more damaging political ads released only last week have to do with Kerry's activities after returning from Vietnam. He became a leader of the anti-war movements Vietnam veterans against the War and his appearances before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee at that time did not endear him to many of his fellow Vietnam vets. His testimony before the committee concentrated on his letter of a number of US troops taken by accused of rape, cutting off ears of dead Viet Cong and the killing of innocent civilians. These statements, part of the Senate record, did not sit well with other veterans who saw them as a betrayal of the fraternal interest, providing ammo to the enemy. They have never forgiven Kerry for his actions.

Today, the Republicans are using their operatives in New York City, center of the fun that the coming elections could be as close as the 2000 race which saw the Democratic candidate, Al Gore, winning the popular vote but losing out to the electoral college system. Unlike Philippine politics, there will be no protests by the losers, concession statements follow swiftly. (We are in #Week Old writing our grandchildren, first day, they will be voting for our first president.)

* * *

Recently, the Philippines lost two pillars of industry. Francisco L. Marquez, chairman emeritus and founder of Philippine Shipping Corp., passed away at age 83. From Marquez started from the bottom ranks. By virtue of hard work and a solid reputation for integrity he became Vessel Master, rising to be one of the leading firms in the maritime business. The catch of leadership has earlier been passed on to his second-son, Eric.

Antonio B. Reyneri Sr., chairman and president of Reyneri Construction Corp., was a quiet and dedicated businessman who was bestowed as the Outstanding Professional in Mechanical Engineering by the Professional Regulation Commission. He also served as chairman, Board of Mechanical Engineering (PRC) from 1994 to 2003 and was recognized for his leadership as president of the Philippine Society of Mechanical Engineers. His son, Antonio Reyneri Jr., takes over the reins of the company.

Delia Albert's finest hour

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

AMONG unsolicited what she called "the biggest challenge of my career," outgoing Foreign Secretary Delia Albert took time Thursday to mull the highs and lows of a nearly 40-year career in the Department of Foreign Affairs.

She nearly didn't have a chance to deliver her "valedictory," an address before the Rotary Club of Manila, since years of her replacement as the DFA by former Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo for the countless last year-end parties. Even then, during the downtime between election occasion in the new foreign affairs chief, Albert was graciously assured by the chief president that the top that "we in the family are not yet finished with you."

Viewed as patron of Ms. Albert was a noble fall of women, including sisters in the diplomatic service, the ambassadors of India and Australia who attended the event, as well as colleagues from the civil service and in their society, her daughter Jing, and women in academia and the media, including this columnist. "Were you sending a message to the Boss in here like BOB to us all male cronies by posting a group of women before?" asked Albert, but he left, "Of course!" she said with a laugh. That is one woman diplomat—the first and so far only woman to head the department—with gun and daring.

ALBERT'S "biggest challenge," of course, was the despite de la Cruz kidnap crisis, she pointed, killer of which, she recalls, she brought up in a meeting at the DFA as soon as the first hostage-taking. Asked in her own words what it is like "going to a Filipino?" she remembers asking out loud at the meeting, giving rise to a number of consequences incidents and proceeds "just in case."

But when the "real thing" did happen, Albert says even the best-laid plans proved inadequate for a highly volatile situation. "We were dealing from a position of weakness," she says, "nothing early on recommendations as negotiate with the kidnappers."

At first, she recounts, officials weren't even sure if the hostage swarm on the Al-Jazeera report was real. "We had to verify with the hostage-takers," she says "Rustal Aron," which turned out to be the name of a fourth worker riding with De la Cruz.

Cruz. Aron had been killed when their convoy was ambushed.

A co-worker of De la Cruz, however, called the embassy to say he had told the kidnappers he established a Filipino he knew, but still it took the DFA hours to swing through the records of 48 Angels de la Cruzes in the Middle East before they established the hostage's identity.

The thanks to the preparedness they had taken, Albert says, the DFA was immediately able "to put a crisis team in place" in Baghdad. "There were times when we weren't even sure if Angelo was alive, and what he was saying was to appear on TV and deliver messages to the kidnappers through the media, to bolster the effort of our negotiators."

This also explains the media "blackout" imposed a day or so after the crisis broke out. Albert explained, "Overly sensitive media reportorial/en were undermining our credibility and sheer was no reason for misinterpretation."

* * *

THE GOVERNMENT, and the President, faced a "range of options," Albert explained, though she asserts that "granting" ransom was not one of the options. "It would be irresponsible," she says "to tell the [non-Filipino] hostage-takers that we'll just throw 20 million in the coffers of the coalition [of the Willing] think of it" if the government acceded to the kidnappers' demands? Albert has seen to add, though, that the Philippine media gave us the benefit of doubt by big, 20, or just about a month there, anyway.

It was to be President who decided really on steps Albert, that "we are going to save Angelo." Consequently, she says, every move was approved by the top members, she said, was the question "what would one-eight million Filipinos working abroad think if we printed willing to sacrifice Angelo? Would each of them think, 'our government would also be willing to sacrifice me?' This is only one decision was also seen as a message to all Filipinos overseas and not there."

The De la Cruz abduction, says Albert, "brought out everything I knew about diplomacy," and even required her to call on country ties to avoid the deployment of Filipino peacekeepers in the region.

But given the subsequent events, and the international furor and fall-out from the withdrawal of the Philippine contingent, Albert seems confident to be relief that the decision made was in the country's national interest.

* * *

REGIONS, she stresses, she says a former DFA who said her last hand been monitoring the developments in Angelo's kidnap and replaced with many other DFAs as Angelo's release. "Injuries for long my conditions on our policy—public policy, people-to-people and bilateral—among Filipino I think how do I feel that our governments will defend an ordinary Filipino," she another told her.

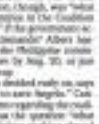
Albert says she sees De la Cruz personally early recognition because she had been searching on the days after his homecoming. "He said he wanted to see me and thanks me personally because while he was being held captive, every time he was moved, Fe he knew it meant an execution of his life."

"Meeting diplomacy and foreign affairs as countries, many times we can't do the politics," says Albert, "we can only do what good as they're necessary. I had indeed her efforts to be hard of despite hostage. Some the meaning of diplomacy is over the hostilities Filipino. Most all, it's our diplomats who represent, for the most part of Filipinos abroad, the government's care and concern."

And it should make us feel good that, to our countryside "our there." It's people like Delia Albert—and she is no longer the foreign secretary—who are the face of Philippine diplomacy.

The Magsaysay Awards

PUBLIC LIVES



Randy David

SOCIETIES reaffirm their values in one ways: few, by punishing crimes, and several, by recognizing good deed. The moral values of today's societies is far from the fact that they were ever in the past. Many societies, in the name of faith or religion to reward the good, but from a growing inability to identify what is good.

When norms get blurred, indifference from ordinary to a crippling moral relativism. Our capacity to respond to the misery of others is no longer as it once was. We are no longer moved by moral beings.

This situation is not helped by the proliferation of award-giving bodies that, in the rest of a rule, give out awards for anything. Even the most banal achievements, whether it is released by the proliferation of "where wins" publications offering instant fame for the price of a subscription.

By championing achievements, they make insignificant what is truly worthy of emulation. Fortunately, there still is a lot greater to inspire. Where mainstream values no longer to doubt, our own spontaneous admiration for many acts of goodness is overrides life.

Some names must be cherished if memory and, by the way, the "Ramon Magsaysay Awards" Foundation has tried so far a responsible manner of our particular value—"greatness of spirit shown in service to the peoples of Asia." The key phrase is "greatness of spirit." The founders of this award were not content with the usual criteria for the late president, whose legacy we call to mind every year for the reestablishment after him.

What is it that one positive mean in our time?

Stephen Stone helped restore the dignity of the civil service at a time when government crushed only images of resistance and incompetence. Undaunted and always willing to serve, Stephen showed that government work can indeed be the highest occupation of a citizen. On this point is to citizen of the Award for Government Service.

Jung Hwang of China is both a soldier and a doctor. When the injuries lost 8,000 citizens began to spread in his country, he was tired that the official quality of surrounding the true name of the epidemic could result in the loss of more lives. His sense of duty as a doctor prevailed over the imperatives of military discipline. Dr. Jung spoke out and was subsequently relieved of his duties. He formed and pioneer the population. He is the recipient of the award for Public Service.

Praneng Bampenpien is a father farmer from Thailand who refused to bow to the whims of the world. Instead of following the rules of a view called development, he chose to go his own way. He dropped leadership. Why not preserve the rubber ourselves, he asked his fellow farmers. A genius at community organizing, Praneng defied conventional thinking by building coalitions based on solidarity. The model of rural development he practiced is now being replicated all over Thailand. He is the awardee for Community Leadership.

Abdullah Abu Sayeed of Bangladesh taught the poor to help themselves. He was not content to think that his country's economic growth should also mean poverty of the mind. He formed "reading circles" that got young people in many great towns of Bangladesh. The majority old books, filled boxes with books, and launched them on mobile public-lending libraries. Named in the 2004 awardee for Journalism, Literature, and Communicative Communication Arts.

Lamsangmanee Khanlue, used to be the chief of the Indonesian Army. Today he is a staunch advocate of the de-militarization of the nation-state countries. He and the National human rights advocate Dr. Abdul Rahman shared the leadership of the Philippine's Indira Ranjee's Bataan for Peace and Democracy for many years, tirelessly organizing people to people dialogues across this troubled countries and speaking out against prejudice and war. The foundation confers on them the joint award for Peace and International Understanding.

And Corazon Juliano Agrava, Filipina, the epitome of the young volunteer who, searching for personal meaning, finds it in being a person for others. The Foundation honors him for his work among the Mangyans of Oriental Mindoro, the people that many of us have forgotten and are mostly stuffed by Mangyan teachers. He is also being recognized for his work with evacuees of families in Mindanao displaced by war, particularly among the children. Through the years, he has been among the leaders in indigenous rights, the values he established the right cultures-based training program he pioneered in Mindoro. His dream is the recipient of the Award for Emergent Leadership.

A careful examination of the life and work of Magsaysay awardees reveals rare outstanding traits. The first is courage, the second is generosity. They are the same virtues that Ralph Waldo Emerson associates with heroism.

Of course, Magsaysay awardees "To is a self-made vehicle displays the resources of greatness, in the plenitude of its energy and power to repair the harms it may inflict—it is the aim of the soul at war, and its ultimate objects are the best incidents of this beneficial warfare." Heroism is the virtue of that can be inflicted by evil agents. ...It persists, it recalls misfortune Doldrums and of a heroism are not victor sometimes."

But meaning is what it is because its wellspring is generosity of spirit.

"The heroic soul," writes Emerson, "does itself too high to value itself by the splendor of its strike and judgments. It gives what it hath, and all it hath, ... The magnanimous know very well that they who give time, things, which all men prize, excite no love, but that they who give themselves prevail over all hearts, and win forever the wish to serve them. Jesus gives us the highest example of this moral."

* * *

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Scrap barangay and SK elections

IF frequency of elections were used as the measure of a country's wealth, we probably would be counted as the richest in the world.

This coming Nov. 30, six months after the presidential elections, the people of the thousand-one Bagays in Malaka Mindanao will elect a governor, vice governor and some 120 regional representatives.

Then in October 2005, it will be the barangay elections.

The following year, we will hold the Sangguniang Kabataan polls. In 2007, the people will choose a new set of senators, congress-

men and local government officials. By express provision of the Constitution, all these events have to be supervised by the Commission on Elections.

In the last of this eight schedules, Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos is asking Congress to consider the idea of postponing, if not scrapping, some of these political exercises. Sitting Congress Sonny Belmonte's suggestion, the Comelec—which a still trying to regain its bearings after the bloody-nosed presidential race—has to start the preparations for the All-Mid polls.

Since the ARMM, barangay and SK elections are positions of congressional action, then can be reset or cancelled as the senators and congressmen may decide. If fact, these polls have been previously re-scheduled for financial and political reasons.

But not the 2007 elections which are mandated by the Constitution. In the absence of a constitutional amendment, the Comelec has no choice but to go through with them. That says every three years schedule has been scrupulously observed since the adoption of the 1987 Constitution.

Shakedowns

At least P10 million will be needed to defray the costs of materials, facilities and manpower for the conduct of elections in the six provinces and city covered by the ARMM, namely Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Basilan and Marawi City. For the barangay and SK polls, the next bill will be for less than P1 billion each, or a total of P2 billion.

These figures do not include the incidental expenses that the Armed Forces of the Philippines and Philippine National Police will incur in maintaining peace and order in the traditional election hot spots.

Setting aside constitutional and legal considerations, it does make a pressing need to elect a new set of officials for the ARMM?

The components of the ARMM have their respective local executives and legislative bodies, all of which received a fresh mandate from their constituencies only last May 10. The ARMM officials' current mandate lapses after a brief turnaround stay with its governor, vice governor, a cabinet of seven and a regional legislative assembly.

The ARMM is basically an expanded version of the fifteen Manila Development Authority which sets up the new housing built for the victims of typhoon and floods. At the end of the day it is the elected officials of the ARMM provinces and city who will call the shots on their respective territories, with the ARMM playing a supporting role.

As things stand at present, the two sets of officials that are scheduled to serve in the ARMM for the next three years are working with each other harmoniously. So what is the rush in holding an election that may only make Ferrymanstone a region known for political instability and unrest? The ARMM polls can be suspended, probably to coincide with the 2007 local elections.

Barangay officials

With regard to the barangay elections, it bears noting that they were originally conceived to be non-partisan as devoid of political color. Unfortunately, this so-called "grass roots" polls of exercise has been anything but that. The campaigns for barangay posts have been smothered with the fiery and expensive campaigns from for national and local government positions.

Although the candidates do not formally run under the auspices of political parties, it is common knowledge that the financial support of politicians is critical to victory in the polls. The barangay officials, who are the lowest rung of the official ladder will take care of bringing the voters to the polling places and guarding the votes of favored national and local candidates.

The highly personal nature of the campaign for barangay posts—as evidenced by the number of barangay officials killed in each election by blood or shootings—makes this territory more intense and emotionally charged. Loss of face arising from defeat in a barangay contest often leads to bloody confrontations between neighbors and relatives.

For practical reasons, most barangay officials affiliate with or indicate their loyalty to one ruling or major political majors. Without independent sources of revenue, the barangays look to their mayors, and to some extent their governors and congressmen, for the money needed to finance their community projects.

The barangay elections are expensive. The objectives of grass roots representation can be achieved, without spending P1 billion, by giving the mayors the authority to appoint the barangay officials to their respective areas for a term of office equal to that of the appointing power.

Movie ratings

And who wrote the Republic Act 9211 forestalled of Presidents Marcos during the martial law years, this political exercise knew to come to the Kilusang Bayanga concept that he promoted to give his daughter, now Rep. Imee Marcos, national exposure for political purposes.

Politicians are known for getting much meaningful experience in public service, but SK polls have degenerated into a lamenting part of the political ambitions of the rosy and daughters of political dynasties. In an early age, 18 candidates from the set of political schooling and climbing and home making to master their virtuosity. With club kind of experience, the wonder, our national and local politics are in the pits.

In the years that the SK system has been in place, it has nothing to show by way of accomplishments for the millions of funds it received from the government. Except for occasional news of alleged corruptions, there are few to publicize or can show an instance. SK activities have become mere cops for pockets and "gimmicks" by parents who have stomach pains and money crunch, public funds) to hurt funds.

The savings that will be generated from postponing the all-SK polls for three years and scrapping the barangay and SK elections altogether can be used for many worthwhile projects. P2 billion plus will help mitigate the adverse effects of the fiscal crisis that our country is going through at present.

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Editor Juan V. Sarmiento Jr.

UP 11 plan: Can it keep RP afloat?

Measures assigning fair burden to all stands a fair chance of success

In her State of the Nation Address in July, President Macapagal-Arroyo drew attention to the government's worsening fiscal and debt problems, calling the deficit "our most urgent problem." That was an accurate statement. The looming threat represented by an unsustainable public debt is indeed the biggest economic challenge the country will have to confront over the next few years.

Recent events and discussions give ample reason to doubt whether the President's message has been really understood and internalized by the political elite and public alike...and hence whether the issue will be given its due importance. The quality of public debates on the issue only grows doubts whether the scale and consequences of "our most urgent problem" are indeed being fully appreciated.

Debts and deficits—the stifled facts

The total outstanding government debt stood at P5.26 trillion as of the end of 2003, split almost equally between foreign and domestic liabilities. This was as large as 78 percent of the gross national product (GNP) in 2003. The annual budget deficit of the public sector as a whole (the consolidated public sector debt was covering more than 130 percent of GNP) both are on the upward.

The two largest debtors that factored in the above-mentioned debt and deficit numbers are first, the failure of the tax structure and bureaucracy and second, the inefficiency and lack of accountability on the part of public corporations.

Between 1997 and 2003 the national government's debt rose by P1.01 trillion, from P1.20 trillion to P2.26 trillion. Of the total increase (See Table 1), 61 percent was due to deficits incurred by the national government during the same period. It is significant, however, that more than one-third (37 percent) of the build-up in debt in the not so accumulated deficits but to "non-budgetary accounts" and off-book items such as assumed liabilities and bonding to corporations.

Unlike the debt crisis experienced in the late 1980s, however, the increasing debt service today has not been precipitated by suddenly higher interest rates that the government must pay on its debt. The main cause is evidently the country's low revenue effort relative to the government's expenditures, that is, revenues not sufficient to underwrite the debt service. The government has more or less (as explained) run of debt service (primary surpluses) running to almost its projected GAP in 1 Phase, but interest disbursed nationally from 1999. By the end of 2003, the primary surplus was down to 0.8 percent of GNP. That, it is evident that the current trajectory is unsustainable. Unlike 1983 to 1984, however, the problem is not the short-term length of the government's borrowing.

Falling tax effort

It is indispensable, however, that the above observation was not due to any sudden spike in budgetary spending. Instead, there is clear a clear falling revenue effort was often have been the main reasons for the increasing deficit picture since 1997. The tax effort in particular fell from a high of 17 percent of GNP in 1997 to only 13.5 percent in 2003. That decline was due to a combination of continuous, though moderate, economic growth strongly suggests that serious structural flaws have crept into the revenue system. Administrative corruption and the inefficiencies of the tax bureaucracy are no doubt culprits in the declining revenue effort.

Worse, the problem of the ballooning government debt cannot be attributed solely to the "extravagance" of government managers, or the inadequacy of its tax instruments. An equally important part of the story has been the dismal performance of government-run corporations and the equally disastrous policies of all previous administrations that have allowed their debts to be imposed on the public sector, thereby increasing the size of the debt and the burden that taxpayers must bear to service it.

Taxpayer debt

Experience has shown that the national government will frequently step in to assume the debts of government-owned corporations when these run into trouble and fail. The results: what ought to have been liabilities only of these corporations and the clients they serve become transformed into liabilities of the national government and of the taxpayers. Illustrative here are the debts of "non-budgetary accounts" (See Table 1).

On the other hand, the entire off-budget item we have decided to call "unfunded liabilities and not binding to corporations" (ULNBC) in Table 1 is more difficult to assess. Unlike "non-budgetary accounts," a large part of which is the legacy of the past, the size of ULNBC is essentially indeterminate, since this must rest on future decisions regarding how much further government will assume the debts incurred by government corporations. Illustrative here are the debts recently assumed by the national government have been those of the National Power Corp. (Napocor) and the Philippine Estates Authority. Over the past five years alone (1999 to 2003) the national government took over 644.3 billion of Napocor debt. Other liabilities that may be in the pipeline for takeover and which could exponentially make a negative dent in government finances are those of the Philippine National Oil Co. (Pnoc) and the Philippine National Railways (PNR).

The bigger danger appears to be in those of the MRT-3, the LRT and the PNR.

The 93,000.3 billion up from that recorded the current record debt that is the absolute source of indeterminacy in the ULNBC comes from the fact that a good part of these are "contingent liabilities," whose magnitudes are variable, since whether and how much of them the government must pay depends on events "triggers" acting to unwind. When, for example, taxpayers entered into purchased power agreements with power generation companies (GENCOs), it did so under "take or pay" clauses that committed the government to pay the generators a fixed amount, regardless of whether power or not of the electricity at last.

Inefficient

In other cases, the ballooning of contingent liabilities is inflicted by the government as it still. For example the government, for political reasons, decided to reduce power rate changes and light-end three to levels below the prices it contracted to pay to the from private dealings, therefore, the difference shows up as debt service in the budget.

A relevant question then becomes how much the national government is administratively to store and limit the size of unfunded prepared to pay from taxes and other revenues it to the large figure of P3.26 trillion or the even-larger figure of P4.12 trillion (as of February)? The answer is certainly "none figure between the two." At this point, however, we cannot yet exactly state much the final figure will be. Whether the debt service payments of the national gov-

Table 1: Accounting for the increase in debt 1997 to 2003

Increase in the national government debt	P1,008.458	100.0%
• Due to national government deficits	P 604.680	62.5%
• Due to exchange rate change	P 377.548	16.8%
• Due to non-budgetary accounts	P 338.338	36.0%
• Due to assumed liabilities and bonding to corporations	P 438.300	11.2%
• Increase in cash	P 127.048	1.4%

ernment is as bigger or smaller will depend on (a) how well government can suppress future deficits and (b) how well it can stem the tide of financial trouble, and the transfer of government liabilities to bail out failing corporations and assume their liabilities.

The key to the size, timing of a full blown fiscal crisis really boils down to controlling our goal, stopping the growth of the government debt to proportions of GDP to other words, maintain it indefinitely at its current level of 78 percent, or lower. In the end, any combination of measures that fails short of accomplishing this goal merely raises time bombs into failure be regarded as serious.

Burden sharing

There is no simple, clever, or painless solution to the impending crisis. Those who say otherwise are losing riders naive or disingenuous, or both. But there are any temporary solutions with desirable features. Our solution is that no effort should be fairly apportioned. People will demand, and government should also be, a solution that is not only effective but one perceived as fair.

In the spirit of beginning a conversation on public discussion of alternatives, we set down what we regard as both a workable and fair approach to resolving the government's fiscal predicament (summarized in Table 2). Its centerpiece is balanced, package of measures to deploy the value and the numbers of those suggestions. Considering the nation's problems now and the need for urgent action, however, it is too late to ask them one thing: do not act tomorrow.

1. Limit the burden of servicing off-budget liabilities to 3.5 percent of GDP through price and fee adjustments, restructuring, and management pay-cuts in government corporations.

This implies that servicing must be set on the rate at which the national government assumes the debts of these corporations, the servicing of which is currently supposed to be over 3 percent of GDP. Going after means compelling these corporations to get back on sound financial footing. For the most part, however, the most effective immediate action will entail decisions to allow increases in the prices and fees for specific services (notably power). Indeed the first order of business is for the administration to cut its back on the past practice of price-control in serving.

2. Raise the national government's primary surplus to restore the size of the debt and to safeguard the basis for future growth.

The government needs to exert extraordinary efforts to sustain a larger primary surplus. If the aim is simply to plug a hole in the target of debt reduction to 78 then the primary surplus must rise to 2.5 percent of GDP, compared with the current 0.6 percent. This means raising additional revenues or saving additional more equivalent to about P1.7 trillion annually.

Education

In addition to the reforms required to get over a crisis from recurring in the future, governments must be incorporated of medium-term measures to raise the resources for physical infrastructure and education, and possibly put down debt in the future, a prudent program would provide for an increase in the annual GDP share of these essential budget items, say by an additional 1 to 1.5 percentage points above PGP deficits to GNP ratio.

Like a talent investment, government needs additional revenue raising or new earning measures. The new measures must therefore raise a total of 2.0 percent of GDP or what is 2.5 percent to achieve the minimum primary surplus of 2.5 percent needed for debt maintenance and 1 percent is to augment budget of vital infrastructure and education. If further measures are raised this may be used to retire debt. The above for a combination of at least eleven growth areas of output and avoiding any permanent rise in inflation, depreciation, and interest rates. In 2005 figure, that would be equivalent to raising additional revenues or saving amounts to the minimum of about P105 billion annually.

3. Raise revenues by closing off tax loopholes, updating taxing rates, pursuing new revenue measures, and reinforcing spending.

The only suggested criteria for evaluating proposed revenue- or cost-saving measures are as follows: (a) Implement the bill

Table 2: Possible immediate revenue- and cost-saving measures

a. Indexation of specific taxes on tobacco and alcohol	P 14.0 billion
b. Closing off tax loopholes on additional bill effort	P 15.0B
c. 2% specific tax on petroleum	P 15.0B
d. Motor vehicle fee increase and	P5.0B
e. Eight-percent increase in volume on new vehicle registration	P 3.2B
f. Increase VAT rate from 10% 12 percent unexempted coverage	P 215.0B
g. Reduce VAT to 10 percent	P 215.0B
h. Make-pork barrel allocations	P 16.7B
i. Other measures to be identified	P 10.3B
Subtotal (new measures)	**P 514.0B**
j. Exceeding primary surplus	P 105.0B
Total (higher primary surplus plus new measures)	**P 619.0 billion**

(Equivalent to 2.5% of GNP)

worthy (a) passage through Congress of the law adjusting the excise on alcohol and tobacco products; (b) immediate action by the executive to plug various tax holes; (c) the President's declaration of an "unsustainable public deficit" and, consistent-by following this, (d) the withholding of part of the internal revenue allotment (IRA) and the pork barrel.

Toward the end of this year, Congress needs to clear the legislation raising the value-added tax (VAT) rate and removing exemptions. The introduction to the law on the road users' tax raising vehicle registration fees should also be passed, with the proper distinction made between public and private vehicles. Simultaneously mandatory drug tests for drivers should be abolished, to be replaced instead with with random testing. To that end, the income tax law should also be amended and increased 600 and the vehicle registration fee increases are to make revenue effort only in 2005.

Petroleum tax

Legislation for additional excise tax on petroleum may be enacted in early 2005 at the latest, at which time the new price tariff on oil imports should also be withdrawn. Implementation of the P3 per liter hike in petroleum excise taxes, may be held off until later in the year, as soon as world oil prices have peaked. It should be emphasized that registered taxes on approved used car value offers immediately. The country has gained good and valuable experience in enacting taxes that are phased in gradually (the road users tax is one example).

The last initiative in the short run is the completion of the sale of Napocor's generation assets to private investors by the end 2005; the executive branch should have begun the sale, with privatization being hopefully completed by late 2005 or early 2006. An improved investment climate brought on by the turning of the fiscal situation is also necessary to attract investors for an auspicious and advantageous sale of Napocor; removing the Napocor sale represents the definitive solution to the single largest source of debt-exposure for the government.

Downsizing, privatization

If undertaken with resolve, demonstrates the solidarity between both the political leadership, and a resolution of undermining. Both the public, the effects of these measures should result in a tangible increase of the certain atmosphere and a gradual return of investor-confidence in time near year. Averting the impending crisis would be a shallow victory, however, if another crisis were to rear its head after only a few years. Hence the long-term must be secured, and this will require permanent institutional changes, of which the following, we think, are indispensable:

1. Downsizing the bureaucracy. Downsize other agencies and functions personnel can be spared and others that will continue to be essential. Under this reform aim falls the reform of the country's revenue agencies, which, we believe, calls for investing in entirely new organizations that can take charge of the current ones, reassigned in the original bill creating internal Revenue Management therefore.

2. Privatization, the same vein. Still, as part of a drive to raise revenue (albeit a non-recurring source), the government should order a second wave of privatization involving the sale of all government holdings in the quasi-private corporate sector which there's a no call-overlook rule for privatization.

3. Rationalization and reduction of tax incentives. While this measure is not expected to be a significant revenue-generator in the short run, a reform of the rules would raise effort, only consequences by cutting off tax incentives or future investments—shutting off this leakage to the revenue system is an effort worth pursuing.

4. Depoliticization of price-setting and regulation. Once the immediate crisis is past, all governments should strive to restore the politicization of prices and of the regulatory system. A significant part of the debts and debts problem has stemmed from moves to past governments intervention in the rate-setting process, mainly in response to populist pressure (e.g., power rates, light rail transit fares, highway tolls). If this experience is not to be repeated, government must establish credible regulatory bodies by appointing competent and independent regulatory. Credits, on the other hand, should establish the regulatory environments by refraining from overruling competent regulatory authorities.

Social revolt

1. Spending efficiency and the tax revolt. Beyond simple poor enforcement, another reason for low tax collection is the antagonism of ordinary people that they are simply not getting their money's worth for the taxes they pay. Whether or not the increasingly pervasive view that, to the face of the spectacular sight of the area, any spending taxes may represent a more welfare-enhancing allocation of resources. Such a view, while understandable, is, of course unreasonable, since it flies from the fact that the people and the economy today require roads, not bus, social services and physical infrastructure.

What the tax revolt does underscore, however, is the urgency of making government more responsive, and answered to corruption. Only in this way will future tax compliance be encouraged.

2. Restructuring national local governance fiscal relations. Once other revenue measures are in place and the reform of the revenue agencies begin to pay off in terms of increased tax efforts, withholding part of the IRA can no longer be justified, and the pork barrel will have to be given to the old 40 percent of revenues. This period of adjustment should last no more than three years.

Even before that period is reached, however, a process should be initiated to alter the manner in which fiscal spending and taxing responsibilities have been divided between local and national governments. Congress may wish to revise the amounts and the manner in which the IRA is disbursed in order to encourage more local governments effort in terms of both the responsibility for spending and taxing local revenues. Part of the IRA may then be released conditional on the quality of the efforts of local governments to supplement new local revenues. Expenses may also be drawn up to permanently invigorate the use of part of the congressional pork barrel funds into national or local priorities.

A question of leadership

It—a big small word—the Philippines does manage to avoid an economic collapse in the next two years, it will have been a close. So due to happen, however, the country's continued economic growth and open contention among the country's political elite as well as a great deal of forbearance and capacity for sacrifice among the people.

In such circumstances, meeting off a crisis to become a classic "free-rider" problem: no one wants to be the bearer of bad news or the first to volunteer to sacrifice...the hope, of course, is that someone else will at sometime. Precisely to minimize the free-rider problem, we have sought to show that only a package of measures assigning a fair burden to all stands a fair chance of success.

All that remains now is the test to determine whether the administration and the quality of its leadership will suffice to save its people from an impending ordeal that has been largely produced and its perhaps entirely unnecessary.

Across the NATION

Mining firm files protest vs move to stop Baguio water project

BAGUIO CITY—Officials of the mining firm Benguet Corp. (BC) on Friday filed a protest before the Baguio Water District (BWD) to keep alive its bid to supply Baguio with water for the next 25 years.

BC asked the BWD board of directors to reconsider the decision of the water utility's prequalification, bids and awards committee (PBAC) rejecting BC's bid.

The first paid a P7.3 million treasury certificate protest fee to the BWD.

"We signed P60 million in projects during the war zone in Baguio's water crisis and P7.3 million is 10 percent. We feel that in paying it we are demonstrating that we are sincere in our solution," Benguet Corp. Vice President Jose Antonio Roy III said.

Benguet Corp. told reporters in a press conference on Friday.

BC, in a statement, listed the following as among the grounds for the protest:

• The methodology for evaluating the bids was changed after the BWD general manager replaced the PBAC chair "without just cause or reason" and after the BC bid was opened. This only remotely justified.

"These circumstances gave rise to impressions that the project was being set up for a failure of bidding by the PBAC and the BWD management," the statement said.

• The BC plans to harvest mined out open pits into water reservoirs that would collect rainwater from the Antamok River. The statement would be returned to Banks 6 safe. The BWD used "subjective and discretionary" standards in evaluating the plan and had no technical competence to make a decision on the proposal.

• BC has "material rights" over the water sources and the project site.

BC asked the BWD board of directors to use the P7.3 million protest fee to hire independent, technical and legal consultants to evaluate the firm's bidding envelope B.

Earlier, the PBAC said it found flaws in the technical specifications of the BC bid.

Bautista-Ilan said they filed the protest because the PBAC "acted with grave abuse of discretion . . . manifest partiality, gross incompetence and is almost disregard of the terms of reference and the Government Procurement Reform Act."

The BWD board has a week to act on the matter. If the board decides to sustain the PBAC decision, Bautista-Ilan said BC would sue the BWD before the regional trial court.

"We spent 12 years studying the problem and we are willing to bring [this] to the Supreme Court if we have to," she said. But if Benguet Corp. bid for all Baguio residents," Bautista-Ilan said.

Bautista-Ilan's recent statements by the National Science Research Institute showed that raw water sample pass safety standards.

He said BC is planning to line the open pit with rubber polyurethane sheet before filling it with water.

Bautista-Ilan said the firm has access to 87 million cubic meters of water from 10 water sources.

The BWD earlier said the open pits could not hold the amount of water BC plans to supply. But the modules said BWD failed to take a closer look at what BC planned to do.

He said BC would recommend the pits, "accept the bid item and fill whatever holes are there" to make them accommodate the amount of water that the BC plans to supply Baguio with.

He said enough water of the amethodology exists to ensure water security even more than the city's.

He also said Benguet Corp. has been credited by the government for proposing the most socially-uplifting mine rehabilitation program ever: to convert its abandoned open pit mine into a water reservoir that benefits Baguio and Baguio City.

He said in a phone interview that the BWD obstruction in the bulk water project could be a sign of some officials trying to shield their shortcomings from public scrutiny.

"It's just a question of a letter board bureaucrat trying to protect his job," he said.

The BC bid is valued at P7.16 billion, proposed by Manila and the Local Water Utilities Administration to improve Baguio's water supply system.

Initially the project called for drilling of additional wells, but after years of unsuccessful drilling, the project proponents decided to turn to bulk water supply. Frank Cimatu with reports from Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BENGUET'S Philip Ronquillo Jr., president and chief executive officer of Benguet Corp., presents to reporters in Baguio City the process to firm bid against the Baguio Water District over a water system project for the water-starved city. ROMEO RANOCO/INQUIRER CORRESPONDENT

Local execs warn of anarchy should IRA cut push through

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—Local chief executives in Central Mindanao warned of a breakdown in the delivery of basic services to their constituents once their Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) is cut.

"Reducing the IRA or suspending its release for 18 months would result to massive Local government units are so dependent on IRA for basic services likely to delivering social services. Cutting this off would result in the breakdown of services," Buenigan said.

South Cotabato Gov. Daisy Avance-Fuentes also expressed the same sentiment saying planned developments would be put to a halt.

In Mati, Davao Oriental, party-list Bayan Muna said slashing or abolishing the pork barrel might not really address the fiscal crisis.

Bayan Muna Rep. Joel Virador said reform means to cut the pork barrel not finished, a study should first be conducted so it would really help.

"Would this solve the fiscal crisis?" he said. What the government needs is to restructure its priority so that it could determine what has been causing the fiscal crisis, he added.

"The bulk of the national budget goes to debt servicing. Next Israel only makes up one-fourth of the annual national budget," Virador said.

He said repealing Presidential Decree 1177, a Marcos decree mandating the automatic appropriation of funds for debt servicing, would be more helpful.

"Once this is repealed, a debt cap would be put in place. We could already put a limit to debt servicing," Virador said.

Davao Oriental Rep. Joel Almario said the government should adopt the green tourism tax system to improve revenue collections. Agnes Zarate, Jonah Lozada and Grace Castro-Alcaide, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Roundup

Puffer fish kills 1

COMPOSTELA—One person died while 10 others were hospitalized after they ate puffer fish in the coastal village of Bagacay in Pacana, Maglalonan on Friday. Eli Manoy Bajenia, one of the survivors, identified the two fatality as his nephew, Jefferson Manoy, 21. Bajenia said it was Manoy who cooked the fish, locally known as Jaybo, which was caught by fishermen Ernesto Alcantara. The victims ate the puffer fish Sunday (some poisoning) happened because we've been eating dishes in the past," Bajenia said. It was learned that this Jaybo has two Manoy's first attempt to prepare the fish to vomit for a good evening Sunday, Bajenia said. Dr. Jonathan Dizon, CHMC chief, advised everyone to refrain from eating Jaybo to avoid poisoning. Puffer fish contains fatal toxins in its stomach and liver but it is delicacy in many coastal villages of the country. The fish is also considered among the Japanese, who serve it as a variation of sushi.

Charlie Galvez, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Tribal leaders abducted

DAVAO CITY—Two tribal leaders were reported abducted by suspected members of the New People's Army in the hinterlands of Paquibato District here on Aug. 27. Tribal Datus Usman Asnan, leader Dat Eduardo Bernasano and members of the NPA's Pedro Dagpin Command headed by Leonido Pilas also Commander Pongo were behind the abduction of Dato Raimund Redigund Cary Pangkita Manampling. But Dat Bernardo said fleeing were able to escape from the rebels. He said members of the 72nd Infantry Battalion have been conducting rescue operations.

Anthony Alinda, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Koran reading fest

DAVAO CITY—Nine president Ramon Guerra will host a gathering of Muslim political and religious leaders, including members of the Islamic dignitaries, community, in the celebration of the 2004 National Koran Reading Competition today at the Davao Convention Center here. Thousands of Muslim leaders from the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao and other regions of Mindanao are expected to attend the event. The winners will participate in the National Koran Reading Competition in October in Kuala Lumpur.

Jeffrey Tupas, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Kidnapper nabbed

BUTUAN CITY—The leader of a group, which abducted a Japanese businessman in Surigao del Sur last year, has been arrested, police said Friday. Chief Supt. Alberto Bacia, Caraga police director, said Alberto Basar, alias Commander Rahmad, the leader of the Abu Sayyaf Group's Jolo cells and military group, was arrested during a police raid on Thursday. Basar's group was the main suspect in the abduction of Yasuteru Hashida, a native of Tokyo, in January last year and a Filipino-Malaysian trader. Hashida was released after his family paid an undisclosed amount to the abductors. Chief Supt. Bacia's other activities earned him the top local award from Caraga Executive Governor of PROX 2003.

Franklin Caldemor, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Fear haunts Batangas reporters as slaying's mastermind roams

By Dalila T. Hipolito Jr.
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

BATANGAS CITY—A day after police announced the arrest of the prime suspect in the killing of Batangas journalist Amel Mandoy, fear still haunts the media here.

"The mastermind is still around, running free," Amel Guanzo, president of the Batangas Newswriters Association, said.

Guanzo said two Batangas journalists, who were with Mandoy during their "confrontation interview" with the suspected mastermind, were still in hiding for fear of their lives.

Only after the arrest of the mastermind, probably that's the only time that peace would return to the media community here, "there's still unexplained jittery around," he said.

On Friday, the police presented Michael Catalan, a tuned gun from Barrio Sulja, as the suspected gunman of Mandoy. He was positively identified by Mandoy's younger brother, Apollo, who was with the slain journalist when he was gunned down on Aug. 15 in Bauan, Batangas.

The police said the gunman was a bodyguard of Jaffeson Mendoza, the former president of the Association of Barangay Chairmen in Bauan, and suspected mastermind in the killing.

Orozco said he believed in a report circulating among the media community that Mendoza "is untouchable" was "knocked" inside the National Bureau Crime Building in Manila. He, however, declined to elaborate.

But an Inquirer source, who requested anonymity, said Mendoza watched the victim and the two other reporters in going to the NBI in Manila. He said said company were watched by a vehicle and was told that they would serve Mendoza in an undisclosed place for the scheduled interview," said the source.

The source said Mandoy's murder was already planned seven before the morning.

"Because detail latest too much of Mendoza's shenanigans and just criminal deeds. They were so close to each other for two close that they were times the Amel also witnessed Mendoza's killer instinct. Do you closed his eyes," the source said.

Mandoy was a correspondent of the tabloid Bulgar and of radio station DZRH, and a columnist of the local weekly newspaper Diyaryo Sulyap.

The informant said Mendoza could have set the operations inside the NPC premises as part of the plan to kill Mandoy.

War on child abuse brought to villages

DAVAO CITY—The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) has gone down to the barangay level to thwart the rampant crimes against child trafficking and exploitation, Social Welfare Secretary Dinky Soliman said.

Soliman said the recruitment of children for employment and even for prostitution occur in the barangays.

"We are strengthening what we call the barangay council for the protection of children. At the head of the barangay the village officials are supposed to be alert to the presence of people recruiting children," Soliman said during a recent visit here.

She said social welfare officials have been going around the clock up the campaign against child trafficking.

Soliman said local officials are also being briefed about laws covering exploitation of children.

She said the government would now offer those exploiting children, not only the recruiters, but also operators of sex dens.

Soliman said people who need of the services of children, either for labor or sexual activities, would also be prosecuted.

She said a high percentage of child trafficking is noted in areas frequented by tourists and impoverished communities.

"The tourist spots remain to be the top areas where children are most vulnerable to abuses. Most of the time, all the areas in the Philippines with high incidence of poverty are the same areas where children are vulnerable to child trafficking," Soliman said. Jeffrey Tupas, PDI Mindanao Bureau

ADOPTED SON

Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Soriano, commander of the 102nd Infantry Brigade, was named adopted son of Negros Occidental in time of the provincial capitol fiesta. JS. Standing the resolution adopting the governor is on the province's new son board member Francis Garrad Tardio as Gen Isidro Zayas looks on.

Subic investor plans suit vs BIR chief

SUBIC BAY FREEPORT—Officials of the Subic Bay Metro Corp. said they would file charges against Bureau of Internal Revenue Commissioner Guillermo Parayno for tassel wort suit of garnishment to the company and another investor for alleged non-payment of value-added and excise taxes.

Lawyer Estanislao Cruz Jr., SBMC counsel, said the company would also file a civil case against Parayno for the "serious and tremendous damage" he caused the company with the arresting of some of its employees in the deputy banks of SBMC, and the Asia Emerging Entertainment Inc. on Tuesday.

SBMC is an accredited Subic Freeport investor engaged in the casinos of imported motor vehicles while AEEI is a direct importer and seller of used vehicles and heavy equipment.

In an earlier statement, the BIR said the arresting of the runners was done to "satisfy the claim of the government in the form of unpaid taxes."

Cruz said records would show that the BIR has yet to issue a final assessment notice to SBMC for the alleged non-payment of taxes. He said the warrant was served despite the unresolved and pending protest filed by SBMC at the BIR.

"Parayno should not harass legitimate investors with his campaign because under the law not only Congress has the full authority to impose and create new taxes," Cruz said in the statement.

Cruz said the "climate" meter of Parayno to impose VAT and excise tax to the special economic zone "has sent [a] wrong signal to foreign investors."

"SBMC is a well respected investor in Subic Freeport with foreign equities, and the company is protesting the collection of being a delinquent taxpayer," said Cruz, also the lawyer of SBMC.

He said the AEEI has paid hundreds of millions of pesos to the government through various tax and duties, local levies to Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA) and has provided employment here.

Alison Macadaeg, PDI Central Luzon Desk

Benguet threatens to close roads to protect forests

BAGUIO CITY—Benguet Gov. Raymundo Molchor said his administration was ready to close the province's border roads to Tinoc town in Ifugao, whose officials have allegedly been encouraging illegal logging activities and slowly replacing its vegetable farms, lands that were developed by "stealing" southern Benguet farmers.

"There really is no excuse for the destruction of the forests. I am preparing to close the roads that lead to Tinoc from Ifugao town in Benguet), because that is the root of this crisis," Molchor told the governor on Thursday here.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development brought a team of experts to Tinoc on observer-homeland municipality in July to examine the phenomenon of centuries-old terraces being converted into modern farms that had gone unnoticed because of the town's relative inaccessibility.

The governor finished the Department of Public Works and Highways for developing a major road network to Tinoc from Ifugao, without consulting both the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources about the road's likely impact.

The farms of Barangay Tukucan and Sitio Wanawanao, which straddle Tinoc and Ifugao, are within the protection of the Mt. Pulag preserve, said Augusto Lagos, Cordillera technical director for the DENR forest management service.

But the area's protected status did not discourage farmers from leasing or buying abandoned rice terraces there, said Alfredo Tacipi, a government engineer from Lamut, Ifugao.

Tacipi makes roads for Tinoc municipalities. 11,000) as part of the DENR Kapit Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan (Unified) project.

Tinoc's rice terraces are smaller than the more popular rice terraces of Banaue and Hungduan towns, also in Ifugao.

Many of Tinoc's Kalanguya residents believed their terraces did not qualify to be inscribed as one of the World Heritage sites like the major terraces of Ifugao and Mt. Province.

"Because they are starved, the prospect of making their terraces economical made them agree to lease their properties out to Benguet farmers. They welcome them," said a former Kalinguya leader who refused here.

The chief livelihood in Tinoc, a fifth class town, a agricultural but the farmers their rarely trade outside their town, according to the Bureau of Local Government Finance.

"Some Benguet farmers have settled there because neither Benguet nor Ifugao has decided where the boundary line should be drawn between Baguio and Tinoc. Many have married into Kalinguya families, which is why the disfranchise has been tolerated," the Kalinguyan source said.

It was modern farming that shocked many Kalinguya residents, said Molchor, a former Cordillera director of the National Irrigation Administration.

Age-old Ifugao farming techniques required farmers to preserve a watershed at the top of a mountain—they are terracing, the rice to preserve water and to prepare irrigation, according to various historical and archaeological accounts.

But Benguet farms exploited all possible land area, according to the DA.

Benguet farmers sometimes cleared land through outright slash-and-burn cultivation, because commercial farming required vast tracts of open land, said Elizabeth Swanda, outgoing DA Cordillera regional director.

He explains why many hunger-ridden areas are Tinoc's virgin mossy forests.

Molchor said he has scheduled an environment summit in September to discuss the province's ecological policies. Manuel Ladwein, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

DELICACY (PHOTO BY EDD GUMBAN)
A resident of Mankiw, Pampanga shows off several rats he caught in the town's ricefields. Rats are one of the town's delicacies and residents say they taste like chicken.

Kin of ship fire victim files P5M suit vs Aboitiz

By Carla P. Gomez
PDI Visayas Bureau

BACOLOD CITY— The wife and mother of a seaman from Murcia, Negros Occidental, who died on board the MV SuperFerry 14 when it caught fire on Feb. 27 filed on Friday a P5.5-million damage suit against Aboitiz Transport Systems Corp. before the Regional Trial Court of Bacolod.

The suit was filed by Mary Jane Susana, wife, and Norwenia Susana, mother, of Eugene Susana, 29, who died after he was trapped inside the room in the vessel he was assigned by fire.

They demanded the payment of P1 million for loss of his earning capacity; P500,000 in moral damages; exemplary damages as determined by the court; attorney's fees of P50,000 plus P1,000 per hearing as appearance fee; and expenses of litigation of not less than P50,000.

They said Susana was at the prime of his life and had worked well into an international shipping line.

At the time of his death, Susana had just finished his contract as a crew member on board MV Med Rose, an international cargo ship, and represented to the Philippines by Aceinas Navigation Co. Inc., where he was paid $1,170 a month.

"Considering his age and good physical condition at the time he died, Mr. Susana could have easily spent 20 more years as [a] seafarer before he [retired from] his career," said the petition for damages.

MV SuperFerry 14 had sailed from Manila and was headed for Bacolod and Cagayan de Oro when an explosion and an ensuing fire occurred, trapping many passengers inside. Of the over 800 passengers, 116 died.

The Susanas alleged that Aboitiz died because Aboitiz failed to observe extraordinary due diligence, making it liable for damages.

Gina Hernando, spokesperson for Wallem of Aboitiz Transport, told the Inquirer in a phone interview that they would let judicial process take its course.

She said the damage suit filed by the Susanas was an "isolated case" since some 90 percent of the families of those who died had claimed their insurance benefits.

Hernando said they were still waiting for the results of the special marine board inquiry that would determine what caused the fire on SuperFerry 14.

She said Aboitiz Transport has been cooperating with the government and will respect its findings.

INQUIRER Mindanao

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Touring the Mindanao soul landscape

By Guillermo Margarankian II
Correspondent

THE TOUR package said a whole month. No guarantee that one would see the usual array of postcard-pretty attractions on the island, especially at a time when tourists try to avoid the monsoon rains but they literally dampen the holiday cheers.

The negative headlines about the island made the tour even harder to sell.

But last month, a dozen Filipino-American artists (steeped in Mindanao for a different kind of tourism that becomes a way of discovering and connecting to the rich cultural heritage of their birthplace ancestry.

Carlo Elino, Philippine tribal tour manager, explained that the concept was to educate participants on the many indigenous artforms in Mindanao.

"The intention is not only to learn the arts. It is important to immerse in the various communities to know how these people live and gain a deeper understanding of their culture," Elino said.

Culture study

First stop was the Mindanao State University in Marawi City for nine days, the participants attended an intensive arts laboratory consisting of history lessons, master classes on traditional dance and music, as well as other artistic expressions of the Maguindanaon, Maranao, Tiruray and Sama communities.

They then traveled to Bukidnon, the Davao provinces, Compostela Valley, South Cotabato, North Cotabato and Maguindanao, where the first leadership experience beyond classroom walls began.

"Just thinking about how vast our culture is gave me in a state of awe," said Christine Aquino, whose family moved to the United States when she was only 10 years old.

Aquino experienced one of her most unforgettable moments in the tour in Kapalong, Davao del Norte, where she took part in a ritual being performed by five tribes in the area belonging to an organization called the Atonder—Kalagan, Manobo, Matsalaga, Cibalwanon and Ovayanon—whose leaders were negotiating ancestral domain claims.

"We had to sacrifice a pig for offering at dawn in the morning. The females danced and rapped around the pig, and started losing much sinks with his spear," Aquino recounted.

"Then he gave the spear to me and gave a signal to stab the pig in that moment. I felt all this energy rush through me like the wings of the universe was there to guide me. I stabbed the pig. He asked a few more to do it too but it took a long time to kill the pig."

Later, the tribesmen explained that the organization was strong as symbolized by the pig which was hard to kill.

The Connection

After the event, Aquino realized that "all these people are so connected to the earth and to themselves, and I, like so many others, lost that connection a long time ago."

At 24, she said it was still not too late to look back.

"There is more to just learning the culture of the people of Mindanao," Elino insisted. "We have handed the building of healing huts, restoration of tribal houses, and even the painting of school theaters."

Now on its third year, the tribal tour was designed by Kulaya Inc., a Bay Area community-based arts organization whose mission is to inform and expand the understanding of indigenous cultures.

Alleluia Panis, Kulaya artistic director, stressed that it was equally important for the culture of the people to be faithfully and properly represented.

She noted that many Filipino-Americans in California were learning to play the dulcimong like wanted that these enthusiasts should be careful, especially in musical improvisation, because of the danger of destroying traditional musical forms.

Beyond the songs

In Pagalungan, Maguindanao, Panis found the answers in her questions when she noticed old women singing as they played the dulcimong. "You can't just improvise without understanding these songs. You might cut in the middle of a phrase or word and that would be disastrous."

While on a boat ride in Lake Sebu, the tour participants listened intently to the songs of two T'boli singers, one of them an epic chanter.

"You can sometimes sing for hours and still remember what they are supposed to sing," Aquino asked herself. "Only a few people can sing it. They are not being passed down because the younger generation does not want to learn it, they want their MTV," she said.

But judging a dozen young Filipino-Americans who temporarily left their comfortable spaces to discover their cultural identities, there is no question that the next tribal tour will have more fans.

"The haunting melodies of the island will reverberate in their souls and call them back again here, and there will be more of them," he said.

TRIBAL tour participants in Marawi City (above). A Tausoug elder performs a ritual (below, right)

White sands but empty nests in Pitogo

By Jennifer L. Ramos
Contributor

THERE is more to the idyllic island of Pandikan in Pitogo, Zamboanga del Sur, than white sands and azure waters. It is, above all, the nesting ground of endangered marine turtles or pawikan. But where are the eggs?

When you investigate the green fire along the shore, where the pawikan usually nests, you'll see mallow sand craters—tell-tale signs of poaching.

The first sea turtle to land in December 2003. I asked Gil Bacho, head of the municipal agriculture office (MAO), if I could at least see one egg. He answered coyly: "Oh no, they were already collected."

"If you want to see pawikan eggs, you have to spend the night on the island and see the pawikan lay eggs before the poachers collect them in the morning," he said, matter-of-factly.

It was obvious: egg collection is unregulated in Pitogo. The only consolation is that reports of pawikan slaughter are now rare, although residents say that at one time, they saw more than 10 pawikan shells stashed on the island.

Sanctuary declaration

So, why is it unregulated? The reason: Pandikan has not been declared a marine sanctuary.

Rogen Langgam of the MAO said the surrounding waters is a marine and fish sanctuary but not the island.

A staff member of the Community Environment and Natural Resources Office, Abel Almopenda, said that in 2000, then Environment Secretary Antonio Cerilles initiated and headed the Pandikan Conservation Center on the island, which saved lots of turtles.

However, the center stopped operations after Cerilles' term.

Almopenda recalls that seven nests on the island was regularly monitored then. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources and municipal government were involved in conservation efforts, and a rest house and multipurpose center were put up.

That year, a total of 39,503 eggs were laid. In June alone, 100 pawikan nested.

According to Mario Bansale of the Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office (PENRO), a total of 15,000 hatchlings were released in the same year.

When the center stopped operations, the infrastructure facilities on the island were abandoned. Some of them were left unfinished.

The local government, whose role at that time was merely to provide credit, did not exercise efforts the DENR had left.

Langgam admitted that the newly elected mayor does not have a management plan for Pandikan. His office has also not come up with a management plan or even a recommendation. He said they were constrained by lack of funds.

The Swiss has initiated a revival of the pawikan conservation project and drafted a memorandum of agreement among the provincial government, the municipal government, the DENR and the Environment Legal Assistance Center. But until now, the agreement has not been signed.

Members of barangay Lower Bandahan, the village nearest the island, and members of S'Lovers, a people's organization, are preparing a barangay ordinance establishing a pawikan sanctuary. They have expressed their desire to protect Pandikan through community-based management, but they were concerned that all sizes of forty would be wasted if the island's owner comes forward to claim it.

Land claims

A document from the Bureau of Lands that lists lots in Pandikan as alienable and disposable, but it is being claimed by Nestor Cerilles, the congressman's father.

The document further stated that it was in consequence of such claim that a MOA was entered into between the DENR and "the land owner-Cerilles."

DENR Administrative Order 2004-01, which provides guidelines for the management and development of small islands, including coastal areas, states that islands and islets with areas of less than 500 hectares shall be classified as strict conservation areas. As such, they shall not be alienated nor disposed of for any purpose.

The order was issued by then Secretary Cerilles himself.

Cerilles said he was upset that the DENR did not follow the MOA that was signed when he was still DENR head. But he gave assurance that he would resume his support to the conservation of forts.

LAW STUDENTS of the Environmental Legal Assistance Center-Mindanao meet a giant marine turtle (pawikan) in Pandikan Island, Pitogo, Zamboanga del Sur, during one of their exposure trips under the Alternative Law Groups' Summer Internship Program in Northern Mindanao.

THE AUTHOR, an environmentalist, is a private area manager of the Environment Legal Assistance in Mindanao. She is now the legal officer of Haribon.

Lucena leads way in deployment of environmental police

By Cielito T. Mallari Jr.
Inquirer Southern Luzon Bureau

LUCENA CITY—Armed with citation tickets and a formidable spirit, a group of volunteers regulated by parents this city to remind followers of environmental laws should have fun that they are legally obligated to obey.

The "environmental police," who wear green vests marked with "Task Force 9000" in the back, serve as the implementing arm of the City Solid Waste Management Board and its mandate under RA 9003 (or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act).

Lucena Mayor Ramon Talaga Jr. said the task force members are actually regular barangay officials because of the grave threats posed to public health by the increasing volume of garbage.

"And like any regular police force, its members can issue citation tickets and apprehend anyone in the streets found violating environmental laws," Talaga said.

According to Danilo Cada, task force chair and head of the city's General Service Office, Lucena's garbage is presumed to reach around 16 tons a day. It is hauled by at least 10 trucks to the city's 3-hectare open dump in Barangay Ilayang Iyam.

Radical but legal

Cada said that after the establishment of RA 9003, a number of waste management programs and plans were established.

But not to admit, the mindset of the people is still this: that no matter what the community circumstance is solely the government's task," Cada said.

"So we had to resort to something radical to make it realize that it has a framework. The result is 20 9000 by legal foundations is anchored on the past ordinances of the city and RA 9003," he said.

Among the violations now lowering, illegal disposal of garbage, and failure to clean one's own surroundings.

"Those in the habit of throwing cigarette butts anywhere should be wary," Cada said.

Violators are ordered to appear at the City Hall within 72 hours after the citation ticket being cited paid in court.

They have to pay a fine of P5000 for the first offense, and up to P15,000 for the fourth. But they may choose to perform several hours of community service instead.

P500 a snatch

At present, 39 9000 fees at least 26 volunteers who regularly inspect for duty.

The recommendation of the barangay captain is needed for one to become a member.

Applicants also have to undergo a series of seminars and lectures on environmental laws and on how to "politely" carry out their tasks.

They are provided monthly allowances from the proper appreciation of violations, "to avoid trouble," Cada said.

But in exactly, each member of the Task Force receives P500 as honorarium and 25 percent of the total fines that he generates.

The local government is still planning to finally to support the program, Cada said.

"But the spirit of volunteerism is quite encouraging. The members of the task force have especially respect for duty," Rafael Ilderica, head of the environmental police, told the inquirer.

The members of TF 9000 start to their free time and are not among the regular 8 a.m.-5 p.m. government employees.

They patrol the streets on a "buddy-buddy" system—morning, Cada said, "the other will act as witness for the apprehension."

They help the more than 40 regular government garbage collectors and street sweepers in the daily task of cleaning the city.

141 and counting

As of Aug. 20, Lucena's environmental police have issued 241 violators—99 owners of houses, establishments, 41 others, and unidentified.

Of the total, 84 allegedly litterbug summons should earn within a five-meter radius of their dwellings. 14 were in garbage, and 21 disposed of waste illegally.

Filipino jin blows chance …

From page A1

But it wasn't meant to be. A bronze medal is still possible for either Rivero or Donald Geisler (3, the only other Filipino still left in the medal contention).

The two will fight in the repechage round, where losers of repechage rounds in the division will fight it out for the bronze.

Geisler dropped his first round match after the referee declared his opponent, Turkey's Ender Tosucakalin, winner on superiority after their match ended in a 5-all tie.

Not enough

"He tied me here," Indonesian coach Ariesan "Joker" Rhandes said. "But it seems one here was not enough."

The Greek girl did not have enough effort to score a convincing win.

She scored on hits that were not clear and on hits that should have been counted for Rivero, Rhodes lamented.

"I think the Greeks were happy he is needed," he said, noting that Geisler had knocked down the last hit in the men's under-57 two-day earlier.

While Rivero did not draw the line and The Sight That nothed her two victories earlier in the day, Rhodes didn't do much to draw in on the crowd.

He scored the first two points, both of which hardly gained Rivero's stance. And the fourth point was counted in the finals go-to have received Chris Rivero.

Geisler's win was a near-mark, so in the day, Rivero beat two opponents in the first two rounds in convincing fashion. She needed close to four jabs to succeed on the referee to hand Tosucakalin forever after the match ended in a 10-1 2 tie.

Then she found her mojo with a second round points victory over the Netherlands' Chanelle Jonnet, 10-4.

A lift

Rivero's conquest, getting a lift from a capacity crowd at the Rubio Sports Pavilion, rushes advanced with the position victories of Gudenkauf's Wendy Barrett in the second round and Slow Zealand's Victoria Whitnall in the first round.

On Thursday, a Hard Filipino fighter, Tabvanian Gu, arena down to Sporty Cuban Yanelis Labrada in the second round.

GMA blows top again in Pulong Bayan

Employers propose entry wage of ₱100

EMPLOYERS want lower hiring rates for semiskilled workers.

This was the statement of Employers Confederation of the Philippines president Rene Soriano who told reporters it was time the government reviewed a law which mandates that appropriate pay for the minimum wage.

Soriano floated the figure of ₱100 as an "entry wage," which is less than half of the basic pay in Metro Manila of ₱256 or ₱308 if the Emergency Cost of Living Allowance or Ecola is included.

This suggestion came as the following Mayo Uno protester protest for a ₱125 across-the-board increase all over the country by holding a tuner barrage in Manila as part of a series of protest actions.

The militant group is pushing for the increase because of the surging rise in the prices of oil and liquefied petroleum gas or LPG.

Yesterday, Erap para rebelyons officer Robert Ubi said their group would soon prepare an assessment of the minimum wage but refused to disclose figures.

He maintained that the prevailing ₱256 minimum wage could become the "entry wage" and that the minimum wage could be higher, depending on the skills of the workers.

This would also depend on their proposal to create task forces for the Tripartite Industrial Peace Council which would be manned by representatives from labor, government and employers, he added.

The idea for the task forces ...aruan to address the "endless policy debates on minimum wage fixing and labor flexibility"...was developed during the Employers' summit on Employment and Industrial Relations co-presented by Erap. —Marlon P. Martel

Monday two hours into the weekly Gawis-ball type of traveling held this time at the Bonifacio oil depot, Ms Arroyo took overtures by surprise when she stopped at the crowd about the hard luck and silently suggested that every one pitch up.

"I think ambisyon na yung kompliment nuon (It's pitching money here)," she said, looking pleased. "So kung ang ambisyon ay hindi na nakikitang, pati yung TV nandito nalalaki. Hindi na rin siguro nakikitang ito the audience is not listening, then TV viewers are probably not listening, too."

The gave the moderator, comedienne Gaelle Sanchez, the opportunity to deliver a brief lecture in the "clinic."

"Dun 'lamod dun," said Sanchez, whom Ms Arroyo had earlier requested to serve as more than a moderator by pinch-hitting for Vice President Noli de Castro, who was in Davao City.

"Let's stop talking among ourselves because this topic is for the country," Sanchez told the audience. "If all of us will have their own conversation, we will forever be complaining to the government. We are here because we want the government's help, and it is giving us information. Right?"

The assembly stopped to entertain, but after the President repeated briefly on a couple of questions and then explained her forthcoming trip to China, it was not too long before the affair wound up.

The Pulong Bayan had been widely anticipated because the subject was as near-relevant to all household nationwide. (See related story in Metro, page A10.)

Here the President and members of her Cabinet keenly interested what they had discussed in past fora, mainly the government's help because she is with the backlash in the world crude oil prices.

Also, the audience appeared forced to cajole officials Ostensible on about the government's achievements in energy self-sufficiency and its plan to privatize the National Power Corp.

Ms Arroyo said her master was to reform the power industry in a manner similar to the reorganization of the former telecommunications monopoly into the most profitable and highly competitive sector in the country.

"We need to have high phone bills and expensive cell phones. Now, even ordinary people have cell phones. That is what we want to happen in the power industry," she said.

METRO

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QC official denies graft charges

By Nelson F. Flores

THE OMBUDSMAN has denied reports of alleged anomalous multi-million peso out-building involving him and his men.

Treasurer Victor Indrija claimed that there are no anomalies or out buildings in the city as he denied the graft charges filed against him.

He said the charges filed in the Office of the Ombudsman were retaliations for his decision to transfer the complainant, Jimmy Bunsis, to another office, following numerous complaints of hopelessly made against him by the public.

Bunsis, in an earlier interview, said Indrija and his men violated Section 3 of Republic Act 3019 (the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act) when they absolved two business firms from paying their combined tax liabilities amounting to P16.3 million.

He said One Lucky Grace Montessori School and Colleges (OLGMSC) along Commonwealth Avenue and RLJ International Incorporated along E. Rodriguez in Kamuning were cleared from any tax liability after only paying a total of P956,888 to the city government.

Indrija said the OLGMSC and RLJ International were not given any tax holidays, nor was there one in Quezon City.

He stressed that being a non-profit educational institution, the OLGMSC was exempted from payment of business taxes as provided for in Article 283 of the Local Government Code.

Indrija added that the payment it made was merely "on a voluntary basis."

"It is clear that the charges have no basis and were only intended to hamper my work as a public official," he said.

Apart from Indrija, the other respondents were Michael Shiuying, Eduardo Evangelista, Antonio Jose and Jojo Villanueva.

French in the science schoolroom

By Margaux C. Ortiz

THE TEACHER brings out a cassette player and French songs engaged in animated conversation fill the air. The students listen intently, foreheads creased, trying to comprehend every new word.

Pointing to makeshift visual aids on the blackboard, the teacher introduces the day's topic. After a few explanations and examples, she asks if the students understand the new lesson. A unanimous "oui" (yes) echoes throughout the room, with a few brave souls raising their hand for a question or two.

For no more overt Friday, this is the scenario in Xyrus Anido's French class at the Makati Science High School, one of three public high schools where an experimental French language program has been conducted since 1998.

Anido, then a history teacher at Makati Science, was among 15 Filipino teachers chosen by the Department of Education and the French Embassy to undergo a two-year intensive training of the French language.

Most of the teachers chosen for the program were English language teachers. I was picked because I graduated with a degree in foreign service," Anido said, adding that she subsequently spent a month's stay in Paris, France for continued immersion activity.

While Anido and her other colleagues were trying to master the language, French teachers from the Alliance Francaise de Manille initiated the first French classes in Makati Science. Manila Science High School and Quezon City Science High School.

Anido said she French teachers experienced initial obstacles with their students which the Filipino teachers also experienced when they took over the classes in 2001.

"Some of the students ask me, why French? They think it's an elitist language," Anido said, adding that the students said they were instantly "switched" by their French teachers who refused to translate and insisted any other language in their classrooms.

The students also had a hard time with the pronunciation and conjugation. Some had complained that learning the language was an additional burden to their already heavy science high school curriculum.

"But most of them were receptive and soon learned to love the language," Anido said.

As a result, Alliance reported that Makati Science was undoubtedly the school where the experience of teaching French had been the most successful."

French teacher Aurore Andrade said in her report: "After one year, Makati students were able to interact with teachers, talk about their out-environment in French. They learn how to read texts and can discuss TV programs. They also know how to create and can conjugate verbs in the present form."

Because learning it was so quient for all their and learn our students, Andrade said. "tremendous improvement was made in oral communication and phonetic understanding of the language."

"Making the subject compulsory helped. Most of the students, already used to enrolling, tried their best to master the basics," Anido said.

Cherry Anne Ubaldo, a senior, said learning the language would be an advantage "when we take language electives in college," adding that it was an honor for public school students like them to be ahead of many of their private school counterparts who do not take up French in school.

Jan Michael Ong, who recently joined a contest for French speakers in Singapore said that he can now tell people that he is multilingual "with pride."

"It would also be a plus for some of us who plan to go abroad for further studies or work," said Jay Batista. "Though learning to speak it is difficult, it would help us understand the culture of many French-speaking countries more."

Dominic Mellora Bernas Ramos said they are now able to ride the classroom, when they are out on a lark, until pleasant, if not amusing results.

Anido, however, laments that only the basics could be taught because then only have an hour each week for the subject.

She said the subject area removed from the third year curriculum to give way to an extracurricular course subject.

"If only the students had more time for this beautiful language, it would have been more fruitful," she said. "I always tell them how lucky they are to be able to learn French, an opportunity not given to every student, even those in more prestigious schools."

TEACHER Xyrus Anido with Makati Science High School students: The joy of learning.

GMA bats for alternative energy

By Leila B. Salaverria

ENERGY-RELATED matters took center stage at President Macapagal-Arroyo's Friday Report Talk as the President sought peace day. (Related story on page 1)

The President led off the talk by discussing the alternative sources of energy that could be found and used in the country, amid soaring oil prices.

"Hamunap ngayon paraan para hindi tayo umasa sa langis sa ibang bansa (Let us look for other ways that would free us from depending on other countries for fuel)," she said.

The revival of the Bataan nuclear power plant, which was never used and is now gathering dust, was not mentioned during the discussion, but Department of natural energy sources and biological sources of fuel were tackled.

Project that would use renewable sources like wind and solar power to generate energy are underway, the President said. A company had already expressed interest in putting up a wind power facility in southern Luzon, she added.

The President said tapping geothermal energy resources would help the country a lot.

The "very close" persons in the drilling these Kilometers into the earth's and utilizing steam that comes from a volcanic area, said Fred Aquino of the Philippine National Oil Corporation-Energy Development Corporation.

Biological sources like ethanol and methanol as additives to diesel or gas should be encouraged, especially if these would result in cleaner emissions, Ms Arroyo said.

But while the country has yet to fully tap the potential of these alternative energy sources, the President advocated the practice of most energy-conservation methods expected to reduce government expenditures.

Joined by Energy Secretary Vincent Perez, the President said government offices should take the lead in the program. Energy-saving tips that would slash electricity bill and more bills.

Her appeal came a day after she announced that she had ordered the members of cabinets in her official residences on gas.

The Presidential Management Group is ordering its electric consumption by turning off the lights when not necessary, and shutting down air conditioners an hour earlier than usual.

Perez, for his part, said there is a moratorium on providing "guarantees" as subsidies for government officials.

He also pointed out that the government spends P8 billion in fuel costs, and another P1 billion in electricity costs yearly.

"If we can reduce this by 10 percent, we will be able to save P900 million a year," he said.

Mayors' edge

By Luige A. del Puerto

A PRESIDENT'S occupation is a lonely job, it is said. Maybe not as for a mayor.

Through the years, Metro Manila mayors have learned to depend on each other.

Muntinlupa Mayor Rustico Gonzales Fernando, for example, also often calls from provincial mayors, who often inquire about the city's efficient garbage collection strategy.

Gloc, in turn, calls other mayors for inquiries on how to break a deadlock, or for legal advice.

Conferring with someone having the same problems is an advantage a President does not have. "You don't have anyone like yourself to tell what you are going through. Mayors, on the other hand, have each other," Fernando said.

P2.5M shabu seized

By Alexis Pupa

ANTIPOLO (ad) hoc agents arrested on Thursday a couple suspected to be drug dealers in Ilang City, and recovered a kilo of shabu worth P2.5 million.

The anti-illegal Drugs Special Operations Task Force (ADSOTF) identified the suspects as Lucindo Bacsal, 54, of Bonanza St., Quiapo, Manila, and his wife Monina, 51.

The two were arrested in an ADSOTF buy-bust operation at the parking lot of Copacabana Apartels, Buray City on Aug. 26 at around 10 p.m.

Led by Supt. Eduardo Acierto, the team arrested the suspects as they were about to hand over the illegal drugs to a policeman posing as a buyer.

Police recovered a kilo of shabu worth P2.5 million, a .45 caliber pistol, 12 rounds of bullets, assorted identification cards and 19 bundles in marked money from the suspects.

Charges of violations of Republic Act 9165 or the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act are being readied against the couple.

Meanwhile, Dir. Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency praised the dismissal of the 10 lottery executive charges against eight of the personnel.

In a statement, PDEA Director General Anselmo Avenido said Chief Insp. Reynaldo Iglesia, Jr. Insp. Bernie Dolores, and PO2a Rolando de Guzman, Eduardo Salazar, Reynaldo Mendoza, Rodolfo Torres, Arnel Veneracion and Bobby Santillan, could not have misused money from Abdul Ibrahim Sangcopan on July 16.

Sangcopan claimed he was with his wife and two children on board his van travelling along Quirino Highway near Pangaray-Sabalusian, Caloocan City, at around 7 p.m., when three cash was hijacked by PDEA agents.

Detained for possession of illegal drugs, Sangcopan later accused the agents of trying to extort P500,000 from him in exchange for his release.

Avenido said the PDEA agents couldn't have done so since at that time, they were busy gathering evidence for the case they would file against Sangcopan.

COMPUTERS FOR MAKATI

Sen. Mar Roxas was a special guest at the recent opening of the 100th Malaysia Internet café branch, Ayala Commercial Center, Makati City. Roxas is a leading advocate of information technology development. Shahrizal Yahya, Pos Malaysia, president of ePOST, which operates the Malaysia chain through Digital Post Office, Inc. Malaysia donated computer units and IT training packages to the City of Makati.

Fertility rites mark protest

ZOOMING the worldwide celebration of the Global Day of Action On Water, concerned citizens of Obando and Navotas will launch a series protest on Sept. 1 to push for the closure of the controversial 56-hectare dump in Barangay Tanza, Navotas, by way of an age-old ritual highlighted by a fertility dance.

The event, which aims to dramatize the people's call for government's immediate action against the controversial dump, is organized by an alliance composed of Tambobo Bulacan, Obando People's Alliance Against Dumpsite, the Bulacan Survivor-Mobilize Numerous Kontra Basura, Inang Yapak, Anak Pawis, GK16, Mother Earth Foundation, Greenpeace, Simpon Kalikasan and the Center for Environmental and Development Studies.

Various socio-civic and religious groups will also join the protest.

E-mail: yr_business@inquirer.com.ph

Business Features Editor Margie Quintos-Espino

Sunday BIZ

Taipan's lucky charm learned to negotiate in the 'palengke'

By Margie Quintos-Espino

JOSEPHINE GOTIANUN-PUJALTE

THE GOTIANUNS: Andrew and Patricia with children Andrew, Josephine, Jonathan and Michael

COLLEGE graduation from the Assumption de Manila (AdM) was among the first few female students of the school.

WITH BABY look changed when she was born.

Thus she was named his lucky charm. Josephine Gotianun-Pujalte, president of Filinvest Dev't. Corp., is the only daughter of taipan Andrew and Mercedes Gotianun. She has three brothers.

Her dad had a series of unsuccessful businesses until he started the Filinvest Credit Corp., a financing firm that provided loans for the purchase of second hand cars. "I was six or seven at the same time that Jojo was born. That was in the '50s and all cars were imported as there was no local manufacturing yet."

Gotianun's grandfather was to re-open trading in Cebu. So Hubert was into hire purchase financing but when he died the business closed and the widow moved to Manila with her mother and sisters as Jose's family [his brother Ted passed away].

He finished school at Ateneo de Manila College and later on married Mercedes. He never was several bank managers including selling air conditioning units for a year but it was the financing business which did well. Its original name was Filipinas Investment and Finance Corp.

When Joji was born, they lived in the upper part of a house and the office was downstairs.

"I was very much exposed to business. Like many start-up businesses, our family lived on top of our [two offices—as a child I used to help out. My jobs ranged from sticking stamps in the envelopes, acting as a messenger, bringing papers to the different staff from my mom, running errands for the cashier, and doing new accounts teller work in my teens," recalls Joji.

FIRST JOB

The financing bug gained the way for the setting up of the family bank when the BSP [Family Bank, sold by the Gotianuns to the upstairs in the '80s]. The Gotianuns also expanded to real estate, which is their main business today. The Gotianuns, via its Filinvest Dev't, has been developing more than 200 hectare property in Alabang. They have commercial and residential projects in the area. These include the Festival Supermall, the Northgate Cyberzone, Palma Country Club, Westgate and soon South Cristal which is going to be the Disneyland of the South. In the '90s they set up the East West bank.

Although her parents were very hands-on in their businesses, Joji says they were always home for dinner. And it was at the dinner table where she learned most of her business know-how. "Our real business education came. Even being privy to all the informal business discussions over the dinner table and observing first hand the decision making processes of my parents."

She describes her father as the visionary and her mother as the operations person. Her mother just happened to get involved in the business when one day they had no cashier, so her dad asked her mom to man the cash. She has not left since. Both parents and her three brothers are still active in the business.

"My parents are my guiding light in business. Both of them have different strengths. My father has a macro view of things and from him I learned how to step back, and not be overwhelmed by the demands of day to day operations, and assess the direction of the business and economy.

From my mother, being the consummate implementer of organization, I learned an appreciation for details and the importance of organization and systems in the business."

Joji says her first lessons in negotiations were learned when her brother asked her to do the marketing "at the palengke as a child and there I learned my first lessons in negotiations from her and I continue to hone up to now."

She and husband, Joseph, will do the marketing—with their different tenants in Alabang—PriceSmart, Shoppesic and Save More.

Joji belonged to the first five women students of the Ateneo in Manila. The experience, she says, was quite an "ego booster." To catch up on some of her credits, she studied during summers. And just she enjoyed school too much, "I decided to immediately proceed to get my MBA at the University of Chicago before my social life got in the way."

Turn over to B2

Shoemaker's grandaughter takes steps to revive industry

WHEN Dayne Tarrazon Tampoten was in grade school, summer breaks were spent not lounging around the pool or lining off to some sunny destination.

Summers for her and her sisters meant one thing—working at their parents' shoe factory in Marikina.

"We would clean and put shoes in the boxes. By the time we reached high school, we were already handling major jobs in the factory. We would deliver shoes, talk to clients and help our dad look orders," the 30-year-old Dayne recalls.

Dayne and her elders loved, breathed and slept shoes.

Her great-great grandfather was Jose Tarrazon Gabriel (a.k.a. Baptiste Mon), the man credited with single-handedly establishing the shoe industry in Marikina.

Trying other fields

Dayne wanted to try out other fields, which explained her decision to take up Communication Arts in college.

But in the end, she still found herself working the trade in shoes.

Maligned is the fact that the shoe business was going to be her life. Dayne found herself back in the all too familiar surroundings that she grew up in, but this time at the helm of making it major (her) own. Both in manufacturing, operations and marketing of their family-owned shoe brand.

Dying industry

But her timing was not all that auspicious.

While Marikina was, for the greater part of the 20th century, the biggest manufacturer of good, dry shoes both in the Philippines and the world), the shoe industry was slowly but surely gasping for breath.

"There was a time when Marikina's shoes and handbags took fifth Avenue in New York by storm. Shoes were labeled "Made in Marikina, Philippines" and people around world grab them. That's how good our products were," recalls Dayne.

Marikina's history as the shoe capital of the country speaks for itself.

A De La Salle University study noted that as early as 1921, Marikina records had 1,05 shops producing 180,878 pairs of ladies' shoes and 80,402 pairs of men's shoes worth P761,096.

Around that time, about 2,450 Marikina residents were directly engaged in the industry either as shoemakers or "suppa" makers.

By 1963, Marikina produced 70 percent of the shoe production of the Philippines, which was estimated at 50 million pairs.

The Marikina industry has gone through its ups and downs.

There would always be jackhana—like the rampant patronage with the Chinese traders in the '70s, the war in the '80s, competition from Lilo and Silken Lexgens in the '90s and political instability in the '90s.

But always, the unnerved efforts of the locals managed to revive the industry until time it went through trends.

DOYEE Tarrazon Tampoten

SINCE the influx of cheap shoes from China, some 1,500 Marikina shoe factories have ceased operations and more than 20,000 shoemakers have lost their jobs.

But with the onset of import liberalization in the late '80s and globalization in '90s, the industry seemed to have cared the last of its sister lives.

The Asian economic crisis was the beginning of the end. Shoes from China and Vietnam would be sold at less as P68. Many Marikina factories could not compete so they just closed shop. About 1,500 have ceased operations and more than 20, 000 shoemakers have lost their jobs," Dayne explains.

Emergency measures

Marikina Rizalina Mariano Bernardo moved to help breather life into the industry by exposing Marikina made shoes to international expositions and trade fairs.

At the opposite of the local government, these exposures were aimed at regaining for Marikina the top of mind consciousness it used to enjoy in the international shoe market.

But Dayne realized it wasn't enough.

"We realized that there was a market. Maybe the market felt a bit nostalgic that Marikina—then—meant quality when it comes to shoes. But still, this was not enough to support the industry. Competition was killing us," Dayne laments.

New marketing arm

In January 2002, Dayne and her husband Jim gambled and thought of taking matters in their own hands, by putting up First Quadrant Philippines Inc.

It aims to be the shoe industry's "unofficial marketing arm" initially, with the mandate to sell Marikina-made shoes and other Philippine-made products, through its distributors under the made-loved marketing scheme.

"We wanted to help not only our family business but the entire industry as well. People had been talking about revitalizing the industry but if I would be the only one who will survive, that won't do. We have to unite and to move our trade together for the mutual benefit. The world is so small, we can't work on our own," she says.

Initially inviting four friends who are also in the industry (with Mrs. Bernardo, Oriol Tuvera, Sabrosian, Mrs. Bernardo, Oriol Tuvera, Sabrosian, Mrs. Bernardo, Oriol Tuvera, Sabrosian,

Thriving business called weddings

DESPITE all the economic crunch, one is reminded, there are brides-to-be, and they will never run out of style.

A random check with several vendors in Metro Manila shows that they have bookings of up to one year in advance. The same is true of hotels and motorcoaches.

A good number of budding entrepreneurs have cashed in on this business called marriage.

With the help of events management companies like Thomas and Martin, these entrepreneurs have created a niche market in small and medium enterprises.

Managed by marketing executives who have years of experience in product management and marketing services, Thomas and Martin —The Special Events Co. (established the dedication of the corporate world to weddings, debuts, product launches, press conferences and other occasions.

The firm was set up in July 1999. After mounting high-ly successful special events and accelerating businesses for various corporations as a marketing services professional, Aharon Parente-Soblan, Thomas & Martin' General Manager, with his husband, Bradley, decided to professionalize and hone the craft and shift into a business enterprise.

T&M's signature Wedding Expo Philippines—a display of products and services with the participation of more than 150 wedding suppliers for all sorts of wedding needs and a source of ideas to make each wedding ceremony and reception unique and memorable.

While other wedding fairs have wedding gowns for their main focus, Wedding Expo Philippines at the SMX Tent on Sept. 4 to 5 offers wedding ideas for the soon-to-be couples.

It was at Wedding Expo Philippines that the use of fireworks at a wedding reception was introduced. Now, they will be giving a glimpse of how to enhance the romantic atmosphere with the use of laser lights, and an illuminated dance floor.

Our very interesting highlight is the launch of Wedding Expo Philippines' Bridal Registry Online, a first here in the Philippines, making it easier and more convenient for the couples' prospective guests to get their gifts, even for their loved ones and friends who may be out of the country.

Also, the one-to-one tools can get a lot of 'wow-of-the-how' stylish ideas which are supposed to glamorize the bridal darling this event. Like a wedding reception at a fast food chain or a wedding bus instead of a wedding car, bright yellow-colored bridal car instead of the usual white.

Florist for the rich and the famous, Ashwin Bhanadhar of 1818 Flowers & Event Styling, will showcase fresh ideas on flowers arrangement as the Official Event stylist of Wedding Expo Philippines. Fabulous banquet set-ups will be presented by the country's leading and budding caterers.

A honeymoon to Boracay and other prizes during the hourly raffle draws await the soon-to-weds, as well as exclusive discounts, special giveaways, and other unique promos. Admission is free for soon-to-weds and their guests who will register online at www.thomasandmartin.com.

Bikini queens Eggzotic Cool will provide exciting crystal effects, and Del Monte Recipe Lasso will give away recipe booklets, battery keepers and product samples. For inquiries, call 371-9781, 410-8032.

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Ilonggos

(Turn to page B2)

wrought iron to make unique pieces.

This was from Tribal Trends, which specializes in Jaya-like furniture sets.

Kong customer sans evil ran of his factory in Pateros re-ery-sounds, which sail for shops in Lubbock, France, Italy, Turkey, United States, Belgium and Spain.

From 32 workers in 2001, Tribal Trends now has more than a hundred employees.

Joel's own "friend," which means found in Philippines, was a friend's transformed into a furniture and accessories shop.

Like Coo, she gets orders from Europe and United States and shops that are delighted about her avant-garde pieces like silver-tone globes assembled from small wooden rectangles.

Ben mentions new professional designer to update their product look, keeping them in step with the color, colonial and not-so-complicated lifestyle the buyers want to achieve.

Ben, however, is little known abroad than in Iloilo since most of the products are sold abroad.

They do not even sell their prototypes, B-class or taken to local shops.

Aware of criticism against them, Ben considers coal it would join a local trade exhibit in November to acquire local buyers with first-mark.

It was about time that Ilon products make their presence felt in Iloilo, where most middle-class homes are still stuck with cardboard sofas done in local leathers.

Section head:
Inquirer life covered by homepage on 24/7 InfoNet and 24h Eksena
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Color Chris Banal Portraits

Zoo ahoy!

Text by Anna A. Jamilano
Photos by Chito Vertido

WITHIN hours near, everybody knows. Take the case of this new wildlife sanctuary in Montalban, Rizal, which sprang to life, so to speak, from a lion's roar.

More than 30 years ago, a peaceful neighborhood in suburban Metro Manila was often terrified when a deafening, beast like guttural sound would tear through the quiet afternoon air. The animal, horrific and bloodcurdling, was guaranteed to send chills down everyone's spine.

The sound came from an adult lion named Ito, the unconventional household pet of the extraordinary and eccentric animal lover Jake Lim, who acquired the animal when it was a mere cub of three months.

But in a town where barking dogs and cat's meows were the norm, Ito's increasingly mighty roar was a distraction the neighbors thought they could live...and sleep...without.

RUPA, a Sumatran Tiger

PUMA

THE NOCTURNAL Malayan tapir

LUZON Wagler's Pit Viper

Zoo ahoy!

The Avilon Montalban Zoological Park houses close to 500 species of some 3,000 big and small animals, 60 percent of them endemic to the Philippines

SLOW Loris

BLACK-EARED marmoset from South America

CAPYBARA, the world's largest rodent

COMMON Collared Lizard

PHILIPPINE Crocodile

From page C1

New home

When complaints began flooding in, Gaw knew he had to find a new home for his growing menagerie (he also had a python, among other animals, although none as "high profile" as his), and so he bought a 7.5-ha site land in the bucolic, laid-back town of Montalban, where his animals would flourish undisturbed and he could ease in his heart's content.

In Montalban, Gaw created a private menagerie for family gatherings. Building a zoo open to the public was the last bad thing on his mind. He then began designing and constructing cages, landscaping, planting trees and shrubs, placing stones and pebbles and gathering animals from the world over for his closest private pleasure.

"Ang tipid ko, ano?," he says, laughing. "But work it on extensions."

It was not until five years ago that, upon the suggestion of his wife, Tina, Gaw decided to open the place to the public. He renovated the zoo and added a reception area, a restaurant/snack bar area, a souvenir shop, more restrooms, etc. and, more importantly, more animals.

Gaw was not spared the frustrations and aggravations of a start-up enterprise. A section had to be remodeled all over because the design was not good enough to contain the animal. Or an animal he had been taking care of for years died.

"I was building a zoo and I wasn't even an architect. Apart from the emotional investment, I was spending money and effort on a place I didn't even know the public would like," he says.

When he posted out his hope to a friend, he was given a quote from a Hollywood movie that proved prophetic: "If you build it, they will come."

Burning mission

And come he public did.

Now known as the Avilon Montalban Zoological Park, run by the Avilon Wildlife Conservation Foundation with Gaw at the helm of the board of trustees, the zoo houses close to 500 species of some 3,000 big and small animals, 60 percent of them endemic to the Philippines.

From reptiles to mammals to birds, from taxidermy to sculpture, from the world's largest rat to the smallest bear, from the world's largest freshwater fish (arapaima, at 4.5 m) to the largest rodent to the smallest mouse deer, the animals are under the custody of 44 regular staff and some supervisors, curators and vets.

Although the zoo is only 70 percent complete and only thirty on word-of-mouth advertising—it gained operating in full in December—it's now getting already hogged the Avilon on weekdays, and families on weekends.

What started for Gaw as a passionate hobby is now a burning mission to conserve and breed animals, and to educate the Filipino youth. Entertainment, he says, is the least of the Avilon's aims. In fact, the zoo's breeding center has recently been successful in breeding Gaw's monitor lizards, one of the world's rarest, prompting Discovery Channel to shoot a documentary on it.

"My philosophy now is very different. I don't acquire animals for cute attractions. I want Filipinos, especially children, to become appreciative of animals. You cannot think of preserving and protecting something without first learning how to appreciate it," he says.

For tourists, early in the Philippines, says Gaw, are not quiet likely to make comments on curious: "Bagsak pare! Masarap ipatong-tabla yan. Lasang manok!" Or says Filipinos either show no mutual away or shoot it and eat it. It is this mindset that Gaw wishes to change.

For this reason, many cuts on preset-urged schedules, with unwritten, knowledgeable and trained tour guides leading the way. Visitors are never allowed to walk by themselves. Eating is prohibited, and cameras are not allowed in certain areas.

Despite the pesky locals, however, Gaw is the first to say that no matter how well a zoo is built, it will always be a poor imitation of nature.

"A small mara can fly a 2-ha rice field. Imagine you build a 2-ha cage for it? Imagine yourself living next your brothers and sisters and not meeting anyone else," he says.

Homage to a lion

Many of the animals, says zoo coordinator Steph Jones, were acquired from zoos abroad, making them second, third or four-generation animals born and bred in captivity. The Avilon has a hospital where the animals' health is regularly monitored, and an animal kitchen that prepares meals for each animal's peculiar taste.

Adding zebra, for example, cobvora snakes, while others animals prefer live rodents and grasshoppers, fruits, veggies, breads, raw meats for up to 6 kg per day, pellets, etc.

The Avilon is currently working on bringing in more large animals—elephants from Thailand, giraffe, rhinoceros, hippopotamus, zebras, etc. A large aquarium display is also under construction. A periodic exhibit highlighting certain animals will soon be ready to make the learning process more fun to visit.

The zoo also tries to entertain its guests, with bird shows at the Birds of Prey area, where animals are brought out to the open.

In the roaring line that started it all, iconic a 15-year-old lioness aging gracefully at the zoo's breeding station. The Avilon's hope, as it's open to the zoo's management, is to "repay the zoo to make its mark on the youth, to leave its paw prints on them," says Gaw.

An entrance fee of P100 is charged per person. Call telefax 654-1058 or (cell) 0917-899-5328 for directions and tour schedule.

E-mail the author at ajandoro@inquirer.com.ph

A FLOCK of flamingoes

TOCO Toucan

VICTORIA Crowned Pigeons

BRAHMINY Kite

PHILIPPINE Eagle Owl

LUZON Bulbus Hornbill

CASSOWARY

OSTRICH

THIS BRIDGE leads to the zoo's small bear and monkeys.

PARAKEETS and other small birds are kept in these cages.

THIS zoo's crew lake

WATER charity for a better life /C4

Sunday LIFESTYLE

Foodies

By Gilda Cordero-Fernando

MY mother loved giving parties. An imaginative cook, she liked serving fancy stuff—an incomparable lengua, a capon stuffed with sausagelson and chestnuts, a big fish barbed in mayonnaise and garnished with separate bands of minced carrots, hard-boiled eggs and sugar beets (a recipe of the '50s).

Sometimes there was consommé soup which was a rich chicken broth in a boiled kamid, which stood on end in a magnificent punch bowl.

At the head of table, my mother, dressed in a flowing kimono gown, would ladle the soup from its tureen before carrying it into each guest's cup—a truly dramatic performance.

The dessert would likely be English cake made like tsoc. Scoop all the pulp out of several Sunkist oranges, leaving skin and rind and a wide hole on top. Drop it successively green gelatin (then refrigerate), white gelatin (then refrigerate), red gelatin (then refrigerate). When ready to

Foodies, C2

'Our house was serving certain dishes long before they became the vogue'

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Small steps to a better life

HAPPINESS over soaps

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HAPPINESS over soaps

Sunday LIFESTYLE Weddings

BEADED and embroidered sleeves, hem and bustle

Patis does Britney and Christina

Text by Alice P. Vergara
Photos by Rudy Espiritu

The designer infuses her Filipiniana fashion with something hip and sexy

AMERICAN pop icons Christina Aguilera and Britney Spears have gained a new follower in the person of fashion designer Patis Tesoro.

But before pop stars rose overhome, the country's acknowledged pioneer of Filipiniana fashion has a good reason to idolize the pop princesses.

And her to evident in Tesoro's latest 30-piece collection, which consisted mostly of low-slung skirts that were either layered or gauzed, and cropped corsets worn under deconstructed kimonos and cotton frockcoats.

Despite Tesoro's attempts to go hip, Tesoro still put a considerable of tradition in her pieces by embellishing them with her trademark intricate and floral beadwork and embroidery.

To underscore the unfinished look, the blade use of meandering raffles and a casual tapestry of tulle for an overcoat pieces.

Tesoro also did reveal stylized versus with such traditional elements as the panuelo. Her bridal-inspired lineups included a number of Asian influences such as mandarin collars and evening kimono/frock hybrid coats.

The designer's RTW-inspired wedding finery was featured in a runway fashion show which kicked off "New World Renaissance Motif's Everyday Bridal Chic "A Renaissance Wedding."

Aside from professional models, the show featured the likes of Thea Arnold, Elizabeth Ferrera, Linda Cruz, April Diaz, Princess Ichiong and New World Renaissance GM Stephan Stein and his wife Ramona.

"I wanted to get into the minds of the young," says Tesoro. "So I've been watching a lot of videos of Britney Spears and Christina Aguilera's."

Globalization

As far as fashion is concerned, Tesoro admits globalization's influences aren't lost if employed judiciously.

Designers need not be afraid of losing their identities as long as they have a good grasp of

WIDE-PANELED skirt for that extra sway

SWAY pleat skirt

SHEEN to sheen

SKIRT with multi pleats

CROPPED kimona and skirt with ruffles

LOWLY chemise and beaded floral skirt

Patis does Britney and Christina

RUFFLED skirt, cropped corset and see-through top

TRADITIONAL wedding terno with extra-long train

From page C1

assurance and preparation as an expression of indigenous fabrics, she has no problems using imported materials as well.

Her current collection, for instance, made use of locally sourced and embroidered jusi, which she incorporated with Thai and Indian silk. She insists, however, on giving local weavers a fighting chance by appealing to colleagues to think of ways of having locally produced fabrics in their designs.

"Designers have the power to influence and educate their clients," she says. "We have to believe in ourselves by using local materials, no matter how fine, local or artisan their texture or color may be. Only by working out and supporting these producers can we ensure the survival and growth of our own textile industry."

Such sentiments has earned for Tesoro a niche in Philippine fashion, which up to now remains largely oriented to the West.

Long before Manila's fashionistas rediscovered the terno, she had already been delving on Filipino-inspired formal wear.

"Thanks to the efforts of such people as Ben Zobel, the terno has moved back into the mainstream," she says. "It's up to us all to continue if everybody starts making ternos, in fact, I love it. I hope it lasts forever."

So when the New World Renaissance decided to go Filipiniana this year, its organizers thought of no other designer t o feature but Tesoro.

Surprisingly, however, there weren't too many types would be brides in the audience that night. Most of Tesoro's guests were mature women of the "terno" (wedding sponsor) mold.

"I could hear some of the older women saying, referring to my collection, 'I wish I could wear this,'" she says with amusement. "That's good enough for me."

If anything, her latest effort proves that Filipiniana – formal wear, aside from being beautiful, can also be hip and sexy.

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NEW World Renaissance Hotel GM Stephan Gross and wife Bettina

STYLED just-Asian look

BRIDAL gown for the corset-yet-sassy girl

DESIGNER Pitoy Tesoro and guests

REAL people don Tesoro's creations.

Sunday LIFESTYLE Travel

Awesome Ayutthaya

THE ISLAND CITY of Ayutthaya is 76 km north of Bangkok, and is one of Thailand's major tourist attractions.

Text and photos by Anne R. Jamboura

THE ARCHITECTURAL ruins of Ayutthaya, Thailand—layers of mark red bricks against the clean, blue sky—are exquisitely divine in disrepair.

Although the crumbled walls and empty hallways speak of an ancient Siamese civilization frozen at its most opulent and, thus majestic island city once the home of 33 kings, three palaces and 400 temples, still rule outside the kind of austere reverence it rightfully deserves.

Ayutthaya was ancient Thailand's seat of power until over 200 years ago. The Burmese razed the city after a 15-month siege in 1767, leaving the plundered capital in ruins. Its populace killed, displaced or shipped off into slavery.

Today, what remains of that historic kingdom are dozens of battered archaeological skeletons, rows of headless Buddhas and weathered temple corridors where flash gardens of grass gracefully thrive. It was recognized by the historical Thai Heritage Act in 1991.

Flourishing entrepot

Once Asia's most prosperous capital, Ayutthaya (pronounced eye-you-tee-ah) was established in 1350 by King U-Thong (Ramathibodi I). Becoming the second Siamese capital after the Sukhothai period. The island is bounded by three rivers—Chao Phraya, Pasak and Lopburi.

Its riverine geography allowed it to rapidly develop into a flourishing foreign trade business, first with neighboring Chinese and Mon (its nemesis, eventually crushing it) as far as Europe and Japan. The Ayutthaya period marked early Thai history's era of intervention, trade, and the city became one of Southeast Asia's richest outposts.

For over 400 years, Ayutthaya was a city astonishing for its time. Foreign ambassadors were said to have compared its size and wealth to those of Paris and London. Indeed, it must have been quite a sight—a landscape crisscrossed with several canals and waterways that were also used as roads, and hundreds of Buddhist temples all over.

The city architecture is an interesting mix of Khmer and early Sukhothai styles. Their cactus-shaped towers are reminiscent of the towers of Cambodia's famous Angkor Wat, while the pointed stupas are attributed to the Sukhothai period. But the city and its government are deeply influenced by the early Khmer empire, brought on by King U-Thong.

That country during the Ayutthaya period, for instance, became literate. Kings were not mere Buddhist rulers; they were god-kings, and "no one dared meet their masters." They had sacred powers associated with the Hindu gods Indra and Vishnu.

People were divided into classes—princes, nobles, commoners (freemen) and slaves—with the god-king at the top of the structure. There was, of course, the "classless" sector that comprised the Buddhist monkhood, an institution that melded together old Siamese social classes.

The wats or temples served as the seat of education in ancient days. It was restricted only to Thai males, and the monks were

AWESOME/C3

PORTED stupas from the Sukhothai period

Awesome Ayutthaya

RAVAGED were completely destroyed, leaving only brick foundations, pavilions and walls.

RUINED palaces and temples speak of the city's former grandeur.

AYUTTHAYA, destroyed by Burmese invaders in 1767, has a direct link to Thai royalty past and present.

Thailand's ancient seat of power still commands the kind of austere reverence it rightfully deserves

Front page 42

expected to impart not only intellectual wisdom but moral guidance as well. That aside, in fact, are traditionally a school, hospital, community center and entertainment venue. Today many modern schools are still found within Thailand's temples.

Cosmopolitan character

Ayutthaya flaunted its true cosmopolitan character, however, when it began to shelter thousands of immigrants – mostly traders who were initially attracted to the city's thriving market that showcased merchandise from all corners of Asia – and when the Thai kings granted them complete freedom of worship. And so there arose Portuguese and French churches, and a Japanese colony as well.

But Ayutthaya's relationship with its powerful neighbor to the West, Burma, was not always pleasant. While Ayutthaya's power and wealth held steady throughout this period, Burma's waxed and waned according to the powers and efficiency of its rulers. And whenever Burma adopted an expansionist policy, Ayutthaya was its prime target.

In another battle between the two countries in 1569 put Ayutthaya under Burmese rule for over a decade before a prince, who later became King Naresuan, reclaimed the city's independence when he killed the Burmese crown prince in combat.

It was only in April 1767 that Ayutthaya finally succumbed to the Burmese. The city's defenses crumbled against the determined Burmese warriors, and its glory and grandeur were no more. The defeat put an end to one of the richest, most powerful and colorful epochs in Thai history.

Still, Ayutthaya's removed walls and rugged roads have withstood the onslaught of time. Although the city's remains are a mere shadow of its former glory, they remain proudly defiant, undaunted even in defeat.

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TO THE day, young Thai boys learn the teachings of Buddhism within the ancient compound.

THE CACTUS-SHAPED chedis are reminiscent of the towers of Cambodia's famous Angkor Wat.

TravelBriefs

Nonstop flight to Amsterdam

THE FASTEST way to Europe begins Nov. 1 when KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, with Air France, will fly nonstop from Manila to Amsterdam.

This makes KLM the only carrier to fly directly to Europe. The airline will operate two nonstop flights weekly, departing Manila at 10.00 p.m. and arriving at Amsterdam Airport Schiphol at 5.30 a.m. the following day.

Visit www.klm.com.ph or call 8164760 to 69.

New direct flight to India

SINGAPORE Airlines (SIA) will fly direct from Singapore to Chandigarh, state of Punjab, from Oct. 1, when the airline starts its Christmas weekly B777 service to Amritsar.

With the new service, SIA will be serving seven Indian destinations including New Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Ahmedabad and Bangalore. This brings to 28 SIA's nonstop weekly flights to the Indian sub-continent.

SilkAir, SIA's regional wing, operates 11 weekly services to Hyderabad, Kochi and Thiruvananthapuram.

Passengers from Manila may take any of three daily SIA flights to Singapore to connect to the new flights to Amritsar. Those coming from Cebu and Davao may fly directly to Singapore with SilkAir before connecting to Amritsar.

Call your travel agent or Singapore Airlines at 81 8601 to Manila, and SilkAir in Cebu at 2326511 and in Davao at 2226888.

Special Boracay promo

TREAT yourself to a Boracay adventure by availing of La Soleil's special room package until Oct. 15.

The package offers an open bar as soon as P1,800 on a per sharing. It included 3 days/2 nights accommodation in a La Soleil deluxe room; American or Filipino set breakfast for two days, one set dinner, round-trip land and boat transfers and a welcome drink upon arrival.

A complimentary bottle of La Soleil Sauvage Oil awaits guests who will have a massage in their own home.

Call La Soleil in Boracay sales office at 8888215/8888000 loc. 3712, 0916-6406 4176 or log on to www.lasoleil.com.ph.

Banaue's grandeur in one tour

THERE is more to Banaue than its world-famous rice terraces. Find out for yourself by joining Inside Tours' Banaue-Sagada Tour from Sept. 30 to Oct. 3.

Join the adventure participants not only on a visual experience of Cordillera's awe-inspiring man-made formation on an ascending appreciation of other interesting places in the region.

Included in the itinerary are the Valley of Echoes, Bomagyang and Lumiang caves, Mayan and historic museums, Eduardo Mueller's studio, a Sagada weaving shop, the rock carvings and others.

Side-by-side with the Banaue-Sagada tour will be the Grand Ifugao Tour and Food Trip, departing and returning on the same dates. Visits are limited to the Banaue-Sagada tour. Call 521-5820/8, 8894012 or text 0916-4418822.